

Report on the sample survey of Aboriginal student perceptions of senior secondary schooling

In response to Curriculum Council data indicating that only a small proportion of Year 10 Aboriginal students proceeded to successful completion of Year 12, the Curriculum Council Aboriginal Advisory Committee recommended that Aboriginal students be surveyed to identify those factors that support, engage and/or constrain them in senior secondary schooling (Curriculum and Assessment).

It was proposed that small groups of six or seven Year 12 Aboriginal students from nominated metropolitan, country and remote schools would be asked about their educational experiences. It was hoped that the survey would identify those factors impinging on positive outcomes for Aboriginal students and indicate appropriate changes to be implemented.

Process

The survey team comprised members of the secretariat with support from the DET Aboriginal Literacy Strategy team. The schools were initially identified by the Aboriginal Advisory Committee and the final list was endorsed by the Senior Secondary Education Committee and Council. This list included a range of metropolitan and country schools and a remote school.

Permission to conduct the survey was obtained from the respective systems/sector ethics committees and authorities.

It was intended that staff involvement in the administration of the research procedures was kept to a minimum. However, it was necessary for the school/college to select the students and distribute the information letters and consent forms.

A trial session was conducted to test the sample survey process and the survey form. This identified changes necessary to the process. The time allocation needed to be more flexible and roles needed to be more clearly defined as there was some cross-purpose questioning of the students by the interviewers. The written survey was changed slightly with the addition of 'telling your teacher orally what you know' as an assessment category. The use of Aboriginal team members or Aboriginal members of the school/college staff as facilitators also needed to be flexible and adaptive to the particular context.

The selected students were invited to participate in the sample survey. A process that comprised a session lasting approximately one and a half hours. The session consisted of a getting to know you activity with team members, followed by a 'yarn' facilitated by the Aboriginal members of the survey team. The session concluded with students responding, in writing, to a survey form (Appendix A) – where they could add reflective comments or comments that they didn't wish to share publicly. An audio recording was made of the 'yarn' session.

School A - Metropolitan

The group

Four female and five male Year 12 students were interviewed. These students were in the school's access program and were engaged in a variety of council developed and endorsed programs, VET and Structured Workplace Learning.

The students formed a remarkably cohesive group showing little apprehension in relation to the session and so responded very easily and openly to the questions posed. The students exhibited signs of being a close-knit group who felt supported by the school and in turn supported each other to complete their education.

Curriculum and assessment

Students responded positively to a discussion on Structured Workplace Learning and it appears that SWL represents a model of learning which engages the students.

The concept of friendship played a prominent role in the discussion of curriculum and assessment. When asked what kept them in Year 12, students consistently used the term 'friendship' directly or they referred to the concept of a learning partnership with their teachers and the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEOs).

The value of education in the community was also mentioned frequently by the students, with some students saying that the importance placed on education by their parents kept them in school. Alternatively, one student had accepted a bet of \$100 to finish Year 12, another had tried work and found it repetitive and boring with little remuneration while another wanted to meet the challenge of being the first in the family to complete Year 12. Older siblings who had graduated from the school also played an influential role in the lives of some of the students. All the students agreed that education gave a person better opportunities in life and so they were significantly motivated to continue to learn.

There were mixed responses from the students about the types of tasks they preferred. In general though, written tasks were seen as either a challenging and useful part of learning, or as a necessary chore. Oral presentations too were judged as: being either embarrassing ('*shame*') if in front of a large group, '*when there's too much people*', '*In oral presentations they make us stand up – I don't like it*'; or unproblematic so long as the group was not too large. In general they said that they liked, '*... doing group work – got no shame*', '*I like group work, not just sitting there, getting out and doing stuff, not writing*', '*you can do one bit and can put your bits together and make it better*', and taking responsibility for their 'bits' and collaboratively completing the task. In this way they indicated an overall preference for practical assessment and working in groups.

The students outlined a commitment to the organisation and running of an annual sports event, which attracted groups of students from local and country high schools. The group explained that they ran planning meetings, kept records of these meetings, telephoned participating high schools, organised the event including the catering and the trophies and disseminated information. '*... this goes towards our grades.*' The 'public speaking' involved in this event was seen more as a challenge than a threat because it was a practical activity and working towards reconciliation. This hands on, practical application of skills and knowledge seemed to excite and engage the students.

Aspirations

Students in the group had a clear sense of what they would like to do in the future with most already engaged in a program of study to enable them to pursue their aspirations. Each student in the group identified a practical career as their chosen goal.

Implications for pedagogy

The students indicated that the school provided them with a very supportive environment and it seems that the structure and the nature of support in the Access Program could be used as a model for other situations. The AIEOs are valued and form part of a team in both the planning and implementation process. The fact that the AIEOs were of a similar age group, with some being graduates of the school, seemed to contribute significantly to the student's comfort and well being – they were friends as well as mentors and role models. The value of education in the lives of the students outside school also contributed significantly to retention rates.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School A:

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|--|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 50% | 50% |
| In class exams | 25% | 75% |
| Tests (written) | 50% | 50% |
| End of term exams | 12% | 87% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 37% | 62% |
| Group projects | 100% | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 87% | 12% |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 87% | 12% |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School B - Metropolitan

The group

Three female and three male Year 12 students were interviewed. The students originate from various regions in Western Australia and attend the College because of their keen interest in sport and the ability to access the sporting programs offered through weekly contact with the adjacent Basketball and Football Academy.

Students at the college study a range of courses which include English, Mathematics, Food Production, Art and Metalwork. The group interviewed was very cohesive. The responses suggested that the students felt valued and supported as persons by the College, as the program allowed the exploration and affirmation of their culture both on and off campus. This was confirmed by the Aboriginal Liaison Officer. It was also evident that the majority of the students in the group had experienced school, social and family issues in the past and that the ethics of care, friendship and team work within the school increased their feeling of well being and the likelihood of them continuing to engage with senior secondary courses.

Students participated willingly and were reasonably articulate in the verbal and written domains of the survey.

Curriculum and assessment

The concept of friendship played a key role in facilitating student engagement with courses. It seemed reasonably clear that strong bonds between students and staff, whether teachers or teaching assistants, help to increase the value of education in the minds of the students. The natural interaction between the students interviewed and the teacher present, testified to this fact. What is important to note here is the family atmosphere created by friendly relations between staff and students, especially given the troubled backgrounds of some of the students.

Courses which rated positively among the students had a significant practical component; Metalwork, Art and Food Production. Mathematics too received a favourable review because students felt that the teacher supported them in a patient manner, reducing complex problems to simple steps through concrete examples. *'Maths. Our teacher, like he helps us write out and makes it look easy bro. Yeah, makes it easy. Yeah. Breaks it down, yeah, like put it in an easier way.'* It seems reasonable to conclude that student engagement with mathematics is the result of incorporating a significant practical dimension to teaching and learning. On this note, some of the students also responded positively to English because there were active or practical types of assessments such as job interviewing, or the assessment tasks allowed students to express themselves naturally. The practical nature of aspects of Food production also appealed, *'...because we get to cook. They're cooking'*, as did learning about healthy living.

The discussion on assessment produced mixed responses from male and female students about the types of tasks they undertook but it was clear that extended writing was not the favoured form of assessment *'Hate that'* and that it in fact may hamper student engagement with education. Some students made it known that they disliked this form of assessment because it meant that they had to remain quiet and still. Oral presentations were also not popular. Practical assessment tasks and group work, *'...just do them in a class full of people that can do it with you, something like that,' 'with others'*, were held in high regard and many examples were given from

different courses. The students also indicated another reason for preferring group work was the sociability involved in helping one another to learn.

Performance assessment tasks were acceptable as long as they did not require individuals to speak publicly to a group of peers or adults. One-on-one oral presentations to a teacher were the preferred option among the students. However, a performance assessment task which involved students coaching younger students at primary level was considered a successful solution to the problem of assessing performance within a public domain.

Aspirations

Most students in the group did not have a clear sense of their aspirations. Most believed they would become successful sports persons in their chosen fields.

Implications for pedagogy

It was clear from the group dynamics that a supportive educational environment based on friendship has strengthened student engagement with courses and schooling. Given that sociability plays such a key factor in educational engagement, it is not surprising that students thoroughly enjoyed cultural activities and team-bonding exercises such as NAIDOC week, or a camp/retreat, 'people spend time with each other' that allowed them to explore the local Aboriginal area and associated cultural differences even though they came from different areas. Students stated that being able to socialise with staff and peers through structured activities and recreational time significantly increased the value of education because it was seen as a means of becoming a better person.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School B:

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 33% | 66% |
| In class exams | 50% | 50% |
| Tests (written) | 16% | 83% |
| End of term exams | 16% | 83% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 16% | 83% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 100% | |
| Group projects | 100% | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 100% | |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 100% | |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School C - Metropolitan

The group

Five female and six male Year 11/12 students were surveyed. The students were involved in a range of Council developed and endorsed programs, VET and SWL.

Students at the college participated in the 'Follow the Dream' program, which has been broadened to include the provision of support for all Indigenous students. Responses from a number of students indicated that they had been at other schools prior to the College, and that a major factor in their engagement with courses and programs can be credited to the structures and support provided by the 'Follow the Dream' team.

Discussions with staff indicated that it was their belief that more Aboriginal students had graduated and either gained employment or pursued further educational training through TAFE or apprenticeships since the program had been established.

The dynamics of the group seemed to indicate that there was a reasonable degree of cohesion within the group and students engaged willingly and reasonably articulately with the verbal and written domains of the survey.

One female student was quite candid in pointing out that she did not come to the college on days when there were assessments due or scheduled but other students were far more positive about completing assessments.

Curriculum and assessment

Both their verbal and written responses made it clear that a basic driver of educational engagement for students at the college was the support they received from staff and tutors through the 'Follow the Dream' program. It is clear that activities and tasks that validate Indigenous culture also play a key role in their educational engagement.

A key component of the provision of successful educational support is the concept of friendship. Students were quite explicit that teachers were good when they were seen as mentors, and that being treated as a person enabled students to engage receptively with curriculum content. By interacting with students on a personal level (e.g. a first name basis) and chatting to students about their lives outside school, teachers and tutors are able to engage students educationally through the building of respectful and meaningful social relationships '*...it's a more adult environment ...respect....*' '*We don't do anything wrong.*' '*... it is a good atmosphere here*'. As a result of this, the students accept being pushed to achieve their goals, acknowledge the need to '*...come to school*', and are motivated to perform at their best educationally.

Students placed a significant emphasis on courses which enable them to do tasks and undertake practical forms of assessment. This included courses such as Mathematics and English. A number of written responses flagged a preference for literacy or numeracy tasks that involved practical activities and assessment. Furthermore, reducing complex problems to simple steps through concrete examples was also preferred by students. A number of students indicate they were lost when complex and/or abstract material was covered rapidly in a lecture-style delivery as often happened in mainstream classes.

It was evident through the discussions about assessment that extended written assessments and tests or examinations were not the favoured form of assessment. *'...won't come to school if there's exam'*. Responses indicated that student engagement with one-on-one oral productions, group work and practical assessments is likely to be higher than the more traditional 'extended written response' forms of assessment which require students to perform on individual ability in a quiet and independent manner. The students' written responses further supported these observations with students clarifying their preference for learning and assessment activities which enabled them to socialise and support one another, as well as sharing the responsibility of learning. The opportunity to utilise certain types of equipment and/or technology was another reason students gave for being engaged in an assessment task or activity.

Aspirations

Most of the students who were interviewed had a clear sense of their career goals, which included further studies at TAFE, an apprenticeship or securing employment in a practical field. The male students gave far more specific answers to the written survey than the female students, with the situation being reversed for the oral component of the survey. Graduation from school was seen as valuable, and having seen other Aboriginal students graduate strengthened that aspiration. To this end, staff aim to build an alumni around 'Follow the Dream', with graduates returning to their school to speak publicly to current senior students about their success. The aim is to inspire the students to value education and to enable students to see that there is a strong link between success in education and success in society. Written responses to the questionnaire indicated that the students clearly understand the link.

Implications for pedagogy

It was apparent that a supportive educational environment based on respect and friendship *'...we all get treated equally'*, has strengthened student engagement with courses and schooling. Given that these play such a key role in educational engagement, it is not surprising that students thoroughly enjoyed cultural activities and team-bonding exercises such as NAIDOC week, or a camp/retreat *'...there were no tents or anything ... no TV'*. Students stated that being able to socialise with staff and peers through structured activities and recreational time significantly increased the value of education because it was seen as a means of becoming a better person.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School C

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 27% | 73% |
| In class exams | 9% | 91% |
| Tests (written) | 9% | 91% |
| End of term exams | 18% | 82% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 45% | 55% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 91% | 9% |
| Group projects | 82% | 18% |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 45% | 55% |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 55% | 45% |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School D - Country

The group

There were nine female students interviewed, with an almost equal representation of students from mainstream and specialist programs. Students also represented a range of experiences from Year 11 and Year 12. No student in the group studied for tertiary entrance.

Students were somewhat apprehensive and sceptical at first, but voiced their experiences with apparent honesty. All students agreed that mainstream education in their school was not supportive enough of Aboriginal students. The students explained that some teachers tended to ignore them because: they didn't know how to treat them and were 'scared' to do anything '*... if they don't see us doing our work, um, they won't say anything*'; it was too difficult to manage their behaviour; or they didn't care because of prejudiced assumptions about the low academic performance of Aboriginal students.

There was general agreement that the Aboriginal students were treated differently from non-Aboriginal students by some staff '*...because I feel that Aboriginal kids get ... just ... treated differently*' and they thought that poor behaviour among a small number of Aboriginal students had tarnished the reputation of all Aboriginal students. '*But then there are kids that are like that, they run amok if they get told to do something ... or ... or ... like don't listen. That's bad for the kids that want to sit down and do their work or need help.*' They indicated a desire to change this stereotyping.

There was general agreement that the specialist programs within the school were very supportive of them and that these were built on a valuing of who the students were and respect and friendship.

All the students appeared to be resilient and determined to succeed. Most liked coming to school because it was an opportunity to socialise with friends and to achieve a better future.

Curriculum and assessment

It was clear from the outset that the students interviewed wanted their teachers to push and challenge them in the same manner as they do with other students. It was stated quite frankly that the onus was on the teacher to show respect and by so doing would automatically gain the respect of the students. One student said, '*Like if you respect them they respect you ...*', but all the students agreed with another student who said, '*They should be respecting us first seeing as they're the teachers, they're there to help us. So if they show us respect then we'll be more comfortable and sort of get them to help us out more and things like that*'. Students also made it plain that teachers should not ignore the Aboriginal students in their class because such an action was seen as intentionally hurting them (racist). For example when asked how they could tell when people were respecting them or not they said, '*... by favouring them. By ignoring you*'.

Students disliked having to fight for their teacher's attention, though they recognised that in some instances this was due to large class sizes. There was strong agreement that the school ought to provide all Aboriginal students, not just those in special programs, with greater access to support staff, such as AIEOs. '*I don't see many of them. I think they go to ones where they think they need more care than most, but then we all need help. They should have them in every room. I reckon, that's really what would help them.*' Students wanted to have the choice to study Aboriginal culture and languages, as well as the opportunity to experience cultural

activities. Students made frequent comparisons between their programs and that at the local Clontarf Academy, and indicated that they wanted access to the same provisions as those available at the academy.

In a discussion of assessment, students were reasonably satisfied with having to complete written assignments, but noted written assignments should not be limited to essays. Students showed a preference for group work and for demonstrating their skills and understandings to their teacher in a one-to-one manner. Examinations did not rate favourably, though a near equal proportion showed either like or dislike for a written in-class test.

Of most importance in the discussion of assessment was the issue of homework. Students made it clear that homework made an unreasonable demand on their time and their resources. They explained that obligations and duties within the family, such as caring for younger siblings and other family members, as well as working part-time or simply looking after themselves, made it difficult to commit regularly to homework. The lack of physical resources at home, such as computer access, a room of their own, a desk or a quiet space to study, further exacerbated the problem.

Aspirations

Students had a very clear sense of the aspirations they wished to achieve. Aspirations were not just confined to career choices, but also to the manner in which Aboriginal people ought to live and the need to create positive role models for Aboriginal people. *'... I've seen a lot of Aboriginal people out there setting bad names for us, our future, by say the drinking on the streets and everything like that. I just want to be able to make money and prove that I'm not like that.'* Students valued education and saw it as a means to their success in society. The majority of the students interviewed aspired to practice a career that had a significant public dimension, such as law enforcement, tourism and hospitality, health care professional or performing arts. *'I'm not really sure what I want to be but I am interested in community services like going to remote towns and working with them. What keeps me coming to school is, wanting to have a good future, money, a car and a house.'* This indicated a correlation between the students' own views on the importance of role-modelling in the mainstream and their choice of career.

Implications for pedagogy

Students were adamant that their school could provide more support to the Aboriginal students in the mainstream. It was recognised by mainstream Aboriginal students that specialist programs offered significant support and had helped disengaged Aboriginal students. However, students felt that the extension of specialist support into the mainstream would be appropriate, and it was observed that the current state of affairs seemed to create division among Aboriginal students in the district. An example of appropriate support in the mainstream suggested by the students would be an increase in AIEOs so that Aboriginal students in the mainstream had equal access to tutoring and pastoral care.

Some students also voiced a wish for trained Aboriginal teachers, *'I think we'd feel more ... if there were some Aboriginal teachers. That would make us feel more comfortable and make it easier for us to talk to and ask for help ... than these other teachers'*.

Students also suggested that a greater recognition of and integration of indigenous culture into mainstream education would help to build positive role models because it would make them feel that their culture was being valued. When asked if the learning of a traditional language would help them feel that Indigenous culture was being

valued, student responses were somewhat divided. Students who felt that learning a traditional language did not have much benefit had come to this conclusion because the network of speakers was very limited. It was stated that an opportunity to learn a traditional Aboriginal language should be offered to students who wish to pursue this as part of their well being or further studies.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School D

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 88% | 12% |
| In class exams | 33% | 67% |
| Tests (written) | 55% | 45% |
| End of term exams | 22% | 78% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 33% | 67% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 88% | 12% |
| Group projects | 100% | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 88% | 12% |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 100% | |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School E - Country

The group

Four male students, two from Year 11 and two from Year 12 were interviewed. The school provided a specialist educational program which used sport as a vehicle for educational success. Students were very positive from the outset and participated willingly and openly in both the oral and written domains of the survey in a courteous and responsible manner.

Curriculum and assessment

Students were very forthcoming with praise for their school and the staff, *'...you don't have to fight for the teacher's attention', 'Here you have all the teachers you need'*, and they made frequent negative comparisons to mainstream education, which they considered to be too preoccupied with behaviour management at the expense of teaching. While there were some positives, *'He was a good teacher because he gave everyone equal attention. If you did good by him he did good by you. He made sure no one mucked around'*, the negative comparisons were based on their own experiences in mainstream education. *'In the mainstream there is a lot of bullying.'*

Students explained that their relationship with their teachers evolved around friendship and mentorship. Students liked the fact that teachers and staff were very supportive and they continually raised the bar so that students strived to better their performance. They also appreciated the fact that they were on an environment where they didn't have to fight for their teachers' attention and were with a group of friends, *'I reckon you do work better when you're with your friends'*.

Of clear importance was the degree to which teachers and staff provided pastoral care and maintained confidentiality about problems or issues which students had raised. Some students stated that some of their teachers had made the effort to counsel and support them at home, or to deliberately pick them up if there was a case of absenteeism. Transport to school was no longer a problem but in the past it could be of concern to be the only Aboriginal student on the bus as sometimes bullying occurred, *'I was the only dark skin in there, ... felt left out'*.

Students also explained that the school operated a reward system which was primarily linked to student attendance. Students agreed that this system was effective. It made educational expectations clear by withdrawing students from participation in sports and activities if and when their attendance at school dropped below an established standard. Furthermore, the students understood that each teacher had the opportunity to provide input about a particular student's attendance and involvement, and that one negative report could jeopardise a reward.

Students enjoyed practical courses and expressed a wish for more opportunities to study these in the school. *'I want to be a carpenter so I would like to do a subject like woodwork.'* Students also enjoyed the study of English because teaching and learning occurred within a sports-oriented context, *'English is related to footy and other things'*. Students were in reasonable agreement that assessment types which focused on practical investigations or practical experiments or a practical context were meaningful and engaging. Students appreciated group work and courses which provided them with the opportunity to engage in activities that included conversation.

It was also explained that students studied a traditional Aboriginal language and that it provided them with an opportunity to learn more about their culture. The opportunity

to learn their own culture was further consolidated by the inclusion of Aboriginal culture into the curriculum and the provision of excursions for students to experience cultural events and activities in their local community. *'You get to learn more about who you are.'*

Students equally appreciated that industry representatives were invited into the school to speak about future careers, and there was a keen interest among the group in apprenticeships. It was explained that local industry employed students from the school because the educational experiences and programs that the school offered were conducive to building the right character and social responsibility, which companies and businesses found highly desirable.

Aspirations

The students had a clear sense of direction with regard to securing a desirable career and the importance of education in the process. All students expressed a keen interest in practical career pathways such as apprenticeships or further educational training in sports and recreation.

Implications for pedagogy

It was apparent that the manner in which the school had integrated sport, culture and educational courses was a successful recipe. A reward system linked to the integration ensured a high attendance rate which was positively supported by the students. A likely reason for this positive recognition of the reward system by the students can be found in the pastoral care provided by the school and the model of friendship between teachers and students.

Utilising practical investigations or practical experiments or practical learning contexts was an equally important consideration for engaging these students such as English/literacy or mathematics/ numeracy through a contextual focus on a sport or a vocational interest. A policy of no homework was considered very favourably and students were happy to complete all work at school *'...we never get given homework' '...in mainstream I honestly never did my homework'*. This policy avoided any issues associated with family obligations (responsibilities for brothers and sisters, aunties and uncles), and the limitations on resources at home (no individual room, computer, books, own space anywhere), *'A lot a people come from overcrowded houses'*. It tests the traditionally mainstream assumptions about the merits of homework.

When asked to identify what could be improved, students stated that they would benefit from more AIEOs being employed within the school. This would allow better access to one-on-one tuition, which the students valued greatly. Students also valued small class sizes and the opportunity to work in groups with their friends in an environment of mutual respect. They believed that firm behaviour management, clear expectations and fair rewards were strong factors leading to success at school, *'... the Academy has stuck by us'*.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School E

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 25% | 75% |
| In class exams | | 100% |
| Tests (written) | 25% | 75% |
| End of term exams | | 100% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 75% | 25% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 100% | |
| Group projects | 100% | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 100% | |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 100% | |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School F - Country

The group

Of the two Year 11 students interviewed, one was female and one male. Both students seemed a little apprehensive about being interviewed but became more relaxed and comfortable. It became obvious over the course of the interview that both students seemed reasonably pleased by the growing network of support that the school was providing.

Despite the supportive structures and processes established within the school, both students felt that groups of students responded to peer-pressure and this made it difficult to be a member of a group. *'It's stressful making friends because most of them are white fellas. You have to kind of fit in.'* Individual friendships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, once established, did not necessarily suffer from such peer pressure and mainstream stereotyping.

Curriculum and assessment

Both students identified themselves as practically oriented students. Each student identified strengths in courses such as Applied Information Technology or Early Childhood Studies.

Students explained that the school had only recently begun to affirm Aboriginal culture. When asked to identify what the school offered in terms of acknowledging their culture, both students explained that there were a number of opportunities available such as excursions to events and activities in the local community, the promotion of Indigenous student artwork, the use of indigenous texts in the classroom and tapping into local resources such as Indigenous radio. It was pointed out that the school also extended the invitation to investigate local Aboriginal culture to non-Aboriginal students.

The establishment of an Aboriginal Student Council in the school was seen very positively by the students. Aboriginal student councillors from years 8—12 are engaged in the organisation of a variety of activities and events, such as NAIDOC week or an after-school festival involving live music and a barbeque. *'We get together for our meetings and discuss our classes and what's going on around the school. We organise stuff like NAIDOC week and present our ideas to the school.'* The Aboriginal Student Council was also involved in the presentation of a case to the principal that argued for the flying of the Aboriginal flag to acknowledge Aboriginal students and the land, which both students saw as a constructive step forward.

With regards to assessment, students preferred practical assessment and group work. Written assignments could be received either favourably or unfavourably, and it is likely that the probability of one or the other depends on whether or not the written assignment allows students to engage with course content through a practical learning context.

Students were supported by the school through homework classes twice a week as it was difficult for the students to undertake the work at home, *'hardly anywhere to study, ...lots of kids running around everywhere'*. These classes occurred in the library and so provided students with the necessary resources and space to complete homework successfully. Resources include access to computers, library staff, teachers and an ATA. *'...we meet in the library ...we have a few teachers there.'*

Students also felt that completing homework in a group fostered a network of friendship and positive support.

Aspirations

One student had clear career aspirations in the area of Interior Design while the other was unsure.

Implications for pedagogy

From the conversation with the students, it was reasonably clear that incorporating Aboriginal culture into mainstream courses or providing regular access to local programs and events has had a positive effect on educational engagement. The provision of support and resources to complete homework at school also increases the likelihood of the students remaining engaged with their schooling.

Establishing an Aboriginal Student Council as a mechanism to promote Aboriginal culture also appears to lift educational engagement because the students are given an opportunity to exercise ownership over activities and processes that affirm their cultural identity.

Important too is the delivery of curriculum and the administration of assessment in a manner that is consistent with the natural interests and aptitudes of the cohort. It would be unfortunate if students with practical career goals had their ambition curtailed by educational prejudice favouring the traditional delivery of curriculum content and assessment practices. An innovative integration of content and standards with practical investigations, experiments and/or learning contexts seems to provide a surer road to success for these students and thereby a greater engagement with schooling.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School F

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 50% | 50% |
| In class exams | | 100% |
| Tests (written) | 50% | 50% |
| End of term exams | 50% | 50% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 50% | 50% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 100% | |
| Group projects | 100% | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 100% | |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 100% | |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School G - Metropolitan

The group

The group consisted of six Year 12 female students who were very articulate. The students appeared comfortable from the outset and were happy to commit to the oral and written domains of the survey.

The students were reasonably happy to be at school, although some of the country boarding students clearly expressed a desire to return home to their families. *'My mum and dad want me to be here. They see me having a chance. ...it's hard to be away from my family.'* These students admitted that a key reason for their remaining at their school had been the presence of a family member in the school. Most of the students had been in the school since Year 8. Most of the students were engaged in pathways leading to employment or TAFE.

The students explained that the school showed mixed degrees of support for their culture. The school flew the Aboriginal flag and supported key cultural events such as NAIDOC week. The students expressed concern that more could be done in the area of appropriate resource materials and texts in the curriculum that reflected Aboriginal role models and experiences. Despite this, the students were not dissatisfied with the school, admitting frequently that the school was openly multicultural. This was readily evident in the school environment observed during the interview process. Furthermore, students admitted that while the school was not racist, they proposed that a major reason for disengagement with education among Aboriginal students across the state was racism. A number of students spoke from experience.

Furthermore, the students were adamant that schools in the Perth metropolitan area provided better education than country schools because the metropolitan schools challenged students academically, expected attendance, and demanded a strong work ethic. Some country schools were seen as academically slack and not bothered by irregular attendance. The students also stated that disruptive behaviour among some students in country schools had negative implications for many of the other students who wanted to learn, and that the poor work ethic of some students tainted the impression that teachers had of all Aboriginal students.

From the discussions, it was very clear that the students valued education highly, and that their parents were an integral component in the process of valuing education.

Curriculum and assessment

Students explained that the school had two ATAs who accompanied lower school indigenous students into the classroom. Students stated that they had no ATAs in their classes, but they were not unduly perturbed by this fact. The timetables for each student allowed for a study period and the students explained that they used this time to visit the ATAs in their office in order to study or be tutored. Students also explained that the ATAs provided pastoral care and were often a point of contact between parents/carers and the school.

The school provided homework classes regularly after school one day a week, which the students appreciated because it provided an opportunity to complete homework and get support. Students explained that they had familial obligations or duties, part-time work and/or sports training after school which complicated their ability to

complete homework successfully. It was also made clear by the students that homework classes often had tutors who provided helpful assistance to the students. *'...I don't really get time to do homework but my study classes help.'*

When asked if the students would have appreciated an opportunity to study a traditional Aboriginal language during their schooling, students replied affirmatively. Most agreed that this would have given them the opportunity to learn about Indigenous cultures in a general sense.

Students had mixed views about written assignments. It was agreed by the students that if a written task was relevant and enjoyable, then the level of engagement and the quality of work would be high. The same point was reiterated in a discussion of oral presentations, though it was made equally clear that presenting to a teacher or recording an oral presentation for the teacher to assess was preferred to presenting to peers/class. *'If you don't like what you're writing or speaking about, then you're not going to write or speak very well. It all depends on whether you like the topic.'*

There was a preference too for group work because it enabled students to work with friends, though it was recognised that some students could fail to fulfil the work required, which was considered a negative.

Aspirations

The students had very clear aspirations. One student stated, *'I want to get a degree in Anthropology ...um...study cultures like maybe all around Australia, ...just learn ..., just maybe find new things and stuff like that,'* while another said, *'I want to go work on the mines'*. The students were determined to succeed in their post-school choices, which included employment and/or further studies at either TAFE or university. Students clearly understood that education would help them achieve their aims and felt that this message needed to be given to other Aboriginal students and parents. The students were very clear on the fact that they wanted to be the first ones in their family to graduate from senior secondary schooling. *'It would be nice to have one in the family graduate.'*

Implications for pedagogy

The incorporation of Aboriginal culture into mainstream schooling has played a major role in raising levels of engagement with senior secondary education among these students. From the discussions, the presence of ATAs also made a significant difference, and the students interviewed stated that the support in years 8—10 could make an impact on retention rates in years 11 and 12.

The provision for tutors and homework classes within the normal timetable was another positive mechanism that raised the level of engagement with education among the students. The fact that these students have obligations and commitments after school indicates that traditional assumptions about study and homework often work against educational engagement. It is also clear that pastoral care, clear academic standards and an expected work ethic is as important to these students as it is to non-Aboriginal students. Students commented on and appreciated the higher 'expectations' placed on them as compared to the expectations in the country schools they came from.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School G

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 83% | 17% |
| In class exams | 17% | 83% |
| Tests (written) | 50% | 50% |
| End of term exams | 34% | 66% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 66% | 34% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 100% | |
| Group projects | 66% | 34% |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 66% | 34% |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 83% | 17% |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School H - Country

The group

The group consisted of one male and three female students from Year 11 and 12. The students were reasonably happy with their educational environment, which is a specialist program for any student either deemed to be appropriate for the program or wishing to be accepted. They were engaged with their schooling because the program was delivered off-campus in a challenging but friendly and enjoyable manner.

Students were disillusioned by mainstream schooling and stated quite frankly that their experience in school classrooms had been negative. They stated that racism, bullying and peer pressure, often with no intervention from teachers, had resulted in their truancy. *'Like, I was in the class and we had to do a study on Aboriginal people, and, like, the teacher said if anyone in the class was Aboriginal ... and I put my hand up and all the class, like, just started yelling all these names and the teacher didn't really care, so I ... He just let them go, sort of thing. So I didn't go to the class again.'* Students also explained that mainstream schooling did not challenge them appropriately, nor did it place positive expectations on them. However, the students admitted that the specialist program had reversed this trend.

A major issue for education in the area is the degree to which family circumstances inhibit or prevent Aboriginal students from engaging with their schooling, irrespective of the mode of delivery. The students explained that some students left school because they had apprenticeships or traineeships, but most left because they simply did not like school and often escaped into drugs and alcohol. They suggested that an apprenticeship was sometimes used as a way of providing an escape from school. *'My friends just drop out because they don't like school. I reckon a lot of Aboriginal kids drop out because they don't get enough help. '...yeah I find a lot of kids need somebody to talk to and they need, like, ... like, ... guidance with their work.'*

Curriculum and assessment

The educational program which the students studied was a cross-curricular program. The specialist teacher covered all aspects of the curriculum, integrating EAL/D and Mathematics with Tourism and other endorsed programs. The program focused on employability and life skills, and students were involved in Structured Workplace Learning.

Students appreciated the flexibility of the specialist program and the educational environment, and they had respect for the high academic standards placed on them. They enjoyed the program and the mode of delivery, *'A lot of them can't handle being in a normal class because they can't keep still. They like to be out doing stuff'*, though they did express a wish for a broader choice of courses. It was explained that all subjects/courses offered by the school were available to the students, but they would need to study these subjects/courses on-campus. Students were clear that they did not wish to pursue this option.

There was one AIEO at the centre of a similar age to the students, and it was apparent that the officer had a positive impact on the students. The students themselves explained that the AIEOs they had in their mainstream classes were mostly unhelpful. However it was unclear whether this situation was the result of a problematic relationship between non-Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal staff or whether

there was an issue with the quality of teaching staff and Aboriginal support staff or both.

Students agreed that the mode of delivery was conducive to educational engagement since classes were smaller and the teacher was able to teach/help in a one-on-one manner. Students also enjoyed the hands-on activities, tasks and practical/concrete learning experiences. It was explained that Maths in particular was made more relevant by being linked to everyday activities, *'Our program is better because it is more hands-on ...'* *'They don't just teach us SES ...they teach us how to do knots and stuff to do with them.'* *'We go out and do Salvation door knocks.'*

Homework was not an issue. Students were ahead in their assessment schedule and had used the facilities and resources available to them to achieve this end. Completing homework at home was an issue because of limited resources, familial obligations, part-time employment and/or tensions within the home. However, some students still preferred homework because it occupied and challenged them.

The students enjoyed their assessment tasks, which ranged mostly from short written assignments to oral presentations. Students were mostly not interested in tests or exams and generally were not given this form of assessment. Students preferred group work and explaining to their teacher what they knew. *'Yeah, because when you talk round you extend it more, like what you are trying to explain. When you are writing it down you want to get straight to the point ...you just have to keep on writing.'* Students also preferred hands-on activities and practical assessments. Oral presentations to groups were acceptable so long as the group was not too large or composed of mainstream prejudices.

Aspirations

Most of the students had a clear sense of direction which generally involved working with people. Some students plan to do some form of post-secondary study in order to achieve their goal. Most students saw schooling as a valuable process and see qualifications as an important step towards achieving their goals.

Implications for pedagogy

The students made it quite clear that if Aboriginal students liked school then the rate of engagement would be much higher than it was. The students explained that students 'drop out' because of lack of guidance, the lack of moral support and family commitments.

Students enjoyed having their culture valued and enjoyed the multicultural environment of the facility where they studied in the specialist program. It was made reasonably clear that a limited display of Aboriginal culture in mainstream schooling played a key role with educational disengagement. The students expressed a clear desire to be challenged and to be supported in a manner that stimulates them to learn, and to be given a reasonable range of Indigenous/non-Indigenous texts.

Students also expressed a wish for more AIEOs, particularly from within their community because they saw kinship and Elders playing a prominent role in their respect for education as a process. It was explained that there was often a distinct lack of respect for non-Aboriginal teachers.

Students agreed that raising expectations and standards for Aboriginal students, rather than stereotyping their potential and ignoring them academically, would over time foster positive and productive relationships and better outcomes.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School H

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 75% | 25% |
| In class exams | 25% | 75% |
| Tests (written) | 25% | 75% |
| End of term exams | 25% | 75% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 50% | 50% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 100% | |
| Group projects | 100% | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 100% | |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 100% | |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School I - Country

The group

The group consisted of five male and six female students, ranging from Year 10 to 12, with interests inclusive of tertiary entrance and vocational pathways. Generally students were engaged in the survey and appeared to respond openly and helpfully.

Students were generally positive about their experience at the school, explaining that most teachers made them feel welcome as well as giving them encouragement, support and clarity. However, students did feel that there was an emphasis placed on providing information about tertiary entrance and other post-secondary options to those students in the 'main stream' group while students in other groups were not provided with this information and therefore weren't aware of many options.

Curriculum and assessment

Students stated that engagement with a course depended on the attitude of the teacher. When asked to explain what was meant by this, students explained that a good teacher was firm and strict but was also able to show good humour and take jokes. *'My teacher he's strict, but he knows how to muck...not muck around but joke around with us but not taking it too far and he helps us'* Some students felt that a good teacher discussed the program (e.g. content and activities) with the students and considered their input, effectively negotiating aspects of the curriculum with them. *'Our teacher is laid back and gets the class to discuss what we should do through the day. It's more of a whole class input rather than ... just saying this is what we're going to do, now do it sort of thing.'*

Students also stated that a good teacher cared about students both in and out of school. *'... they care about you in school and your outside life as well. So if you're late they care enough to ask you and try an help you and stuff.'* *'So if you're like, really unorganised or falling behind they try to help you get back up and stuff.'* This pastoral care included teachers visiting students at home to help and/or support the student through an issue. *'... when I'm not in school and I've missed a few days, she'll come around and ask me why and try to get me back into school.'* Students did not like teachers who yelled when things went wrong or teachers who could not take jokes. *'... we don't like .. I don't know how to explain it ... just if you do something wrong ... yell at you and ...'* It appeared that the students were articulating criteria that generated respect and modelled behavioural boundaries.

Students appreciated the support provided by the specialist program in literacy and numeracy in the school and the access to Aboriginal Teaching Assistants (ATAs) in that program. However, students in mainstream groups also expressed the need for access to ATA support. Students explained that mixed Year 11 and 12 classes were difficult since teachers had to cater for two separate groups plus different cultural groups.

When asked about the degree to which the school valued indigenous culture, student responses were mixed. Some explained that the school participated in an exchange program with an Eastern States school which involved experiencing different cultures. Some students were aware that the school participated in NAIDOC week but that not all students were included. Other students stated that not much seemed to occur in the mainstream but that indigenous culture was more valued in programs such as the Clontarf Academy. A few students stated that in lower secondary they had visited some remote communities and learnt more about their background.

Students appreciated the homework classes provided by the school on Monday to Thursday because it gave them the opportunity to not only do their homework but to access support through the teachers who had been rostered on. Students agreed too that homework classes provided students with the space and resources which were not available at home because of obligations and/or constraints. *'I think homework classes after school have helped us to keep going.'* However, the students thought that having access to their actual teachers for a greater period of time (e.g. extended one-on-one tuition) would be far more beneficial.

With regard to assessment, students generally preferred the practical types of assessment tasks over extended writing tasks (e.g. essays). One student questioned why they had to do essays, like in English, for Maths in Practice. *'We thought maths would be like maths, but it's sort of like English.'* *We thought maths would be like calculating, but it's really like, you know in maths you have to do little essay things.'* There was some indication that short, written tasks within a practical context were accepted. Students also showed a liking for group work.

Aspirations

Students had clear aspirations ranging from being a paediatrician to an aged care worker to child care or an administrative position in mining in Pt Hedland, and understood that senior secondary schooling would help them achieve these goals.

Implications for pedagogy

The attitude of the teacher seems to be an important factor in student engagement with a course while qualities which generate comfort and understanding are more than likely to result in mutual respect. It appears that students who engage in their courses do so because they find their teacher approachable and fun while setting standards. Homework could be more structured with regular support from the different subject teachers to keep the students focussed.

The inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum would visibly act as evidence of care, inclusion and support for the students. They would feel more comfortable in the environment of the school if Aboriginal culture is acknowledged more openly along with other cultures. Students were most positive about being accepted in a school when the cultural environment is visibly multi-cultural and the attitude has been one of genuine equity.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School I

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 25% | 75% |
| In class exams | | 100% |
| Tests (written) | 25% | 75% |
| End of term exams | 37% | 63% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 75% | 25% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 100% | |
| Group projects | 100% | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 100% | |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 75% | 25% |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School J - Country

The group

There were six Year 12 students interviewed. Two students were male and four students were female. Students were reasonably comfortable with one another and the environment in which the survey was conducted was specifically supportive of Aboriginal culture and the students.

Students were equally divided about their likes and dislikes of senior schooling, with some students preferring to be at their place of employment rather than school and others expressing the reverse. When students expressed their interests in senior schooling, they explained that they enjoyed socialising with their peers, learning new things and that school provided them with VET training and so greater job opportunities. *'You get to socialise, you get to learn new things. It's just a good place to be.'* Some students stated that they enjoyed school because it provided them with an opportunity to participate in programs, excursions and sports clinics at the Clontarf Academy. When students expressed a dislike for senior schooling, they justified their dislike by stating that there were limited specialist programs for senior secondary Aboriginal students (most specialist programs were aimed at lower school).

Curriculum and assessment

Students were very upfront with their dislike of the preference shown by some teachers to non-Aboriginal students over Aboriginal students. They stated that they were often ignored in the classroom and felt stereotyped as low achievers. It was explained that these factors tended to result in disengagement with the curriculum in some subjects/courses because students were not challenged to do better and so lacked motivation to learn. *'Yeah when I was younger I used to like to run amok, and um, they never expected anything good from me. So when I decided to turn things around I think they didn't really, like um, they didn't really expect, like, they didn't really trust that I was going to do that ... like say for one of my classes the teacher's always helping the other people and then. ...cause they don't expect me to achieve as well.'*

Some students were quite frank about their experiences, past and present, with the degree of teacher disengagement with students, explaining that some teachers either frequently departed from the classroom or simply sat at their desks interacting only with students when it was deemed absolutely necessary. *'...just walks in and out of class like no tomorrow, yeah, ... just goes walking out ...come back in again, sit down ... then walks out for the phone ringing or a coffee break or what ever and all that ...'* Students explained that they disliked teachers who made them feel as if they were wasting the teacher's time. Some students further qualified this by saying that they often gave up asking the teacher questions simply because they had been given the impression that asking questions was associated with time-wasting. *'... makes me feel like ... wasting ... time when ... does come and talk to me ... always growls when ... says it. I ask someone else in the class, another student cause at least they tell me like they want me to know.'*

On a positive note, a number of students explained that they respected teachers who were not only supportive of Aboriginal students as individuals, but also allowed the students to demonstrate their abilities through fair and challenging tasks. In this sense, students were very clearly respectful of teachers who understood contemporary indigenous issues, were able to address a problem, who showed care for the students and who were able to help students through examples and patient

explanation. *'... young and very understanding towards cultural things, even though she's non-Indigenous ... an she won't just push it. Come on, let's do this now and what about that after un?'*

Although there were AIEOs in the school, many teachers of Aboriginal students showed a reluctance to seek out their assistance and/or advice, with the result that the students were often disengaged through inappropriate programs either academically or culturally. *'... wanted our Indigenous boys to play with makeup stuff.'*

The AIEOs acting as facilitators explained that things have *'... changed a bit and our focus more is Aboriginal education officers to work with the teacher and plan with the teacher to modify or make this lesson hopefully appropriate, for them to be able to complete tasks, not to set them up to fail.'* They also lamented that, *'... you have teachers that are set in their ways and you can't change them no matter how hard you try'*.

Assistance and/or support with homework was available through a number of ways to the students. Students agreed that homework classes were good, but they wanted teachers rather than external tutors to run these homework classes. Students appeared frustrated by the different ideas and/or methods held by teachers and tutors, which resulted in confusion as to how best to complete the homework. Students also felt that by having external tutors they wasted a lot of time during homework classes explaining the parameters of a task rather than getting one-on-one support with a task. *'And they ... you try to explain what you've learnt in class and like, they say, they come up with a different ... differently to how our teacher does it in class. I don't feel comfortable doing it their way in case it's wrong.'* *'...and we get in trouble.'* *'Where, if you get the teacher of your subject then you know you can't go wrong.'*

Most students indicated in the written survey that they liked written assessment tasks, though the degree to which they liked writing depended on whether the context was academic or vocational. In the discussion the preference was more towards oral, one on one discussion. *'I prefer to do an oral ... then you can discuss an you can interact as well.'* *'... you start talking and you feel like you're gunna say something wrong then you feel shame.'* *'No oral presentations are good because it's like you just have to have a slide show to back it up.'* When the context was academic, a like or dislike for writing was dependent on the course and the character of the student, e.g. preference for humanities over sciences or vice-versa.

Most students preferred group work, *'... you can share the load ... she was good at the computer and everything and I was good with talking'*, oral presentations and some form of practical assessments, as indicated by the percentages in the table below.

Aspirations

Students clearly felt that senior secondary schooling and graduation were important steps in achieving their goals, and that the specialist programs which school had provided played a decisive part in valuing the link between school and career/employment. A number of students were considering further studies at either TAFE or university, and others were considering traineeships or apprenticeships.

Implications for pedagogy

Based on both written and verbal responses from the students, the teachers who have clear expectations for their Aboriginal students and who support, care and understand them are teachers who can engage these students with the

course/subject. Teachers who make stereotypical assumptions about the academic ability of Aboriginal students are more than likely to disengage them from learning.

The development of appropriate programs for Aboriginal students is also important and teachers can benefit much more from the knowledge and expertise that AIEOs possess. Keeping students engaged with their courses/subjects is far more likely to occur when teachers and AIEOs work collaboratively and in a two-way process for the benefit of the students. The students clearly stated their dislike for subjects/courses where the content was not presented or taught with examples or models, indicating that visual evidence played an important role in engagement with education and the development of understanding.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School J

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 83% | 17% |
| In class exams | 34% | 66% |
| Tests (written) | 50% | 50% |
| End of term exams | 34% | 66% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 66% | 34% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 66% | 34% |
| Group projects | 83% | 17% |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 50% | 50% |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 83% | 17% |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School K - Country

The group

The group consisted of eight Year 11 and 12 students. Six students were male and two students were female. Students were either in mainstream programs or a combination of mainstream and gender-specific specialist programs through the Clontarf Foundation. If students were in a combination of mainstream and specialist programs, then their good standing in the specialist program depended on their regular attendance and participation in the mainstream. Generally these students engaged with their senior secondary education in order to qualify for a traineeship, apprenticeship or employment.

Students enjoyed their senior schooling because it was an opportunity to socialise and to learn. *'A good thing about school is that you meet new people and new friends', ... learn more and get an education.'*

Curriculum and assessment

The subjects/courses that students found engaging tended to be taught by teachers who interacted with the students and provided support through advice and appropriate feedback. Students also mentioned that teachers who had flexible learning programs and employed different teaching techniques also kept them engaged educationally. Most students preferred courses/subjects with a practical dimension, while some preferred academic subjects/courses which contained a mixture of practical and theoretical work.

Students have the opportunity to attend homework classes regularly and many avail themselves of that opportunity because homework classes provide resources, tutoring and afternoon tea. *'... ggod because you get one-on-one tutors and yeah.'* *'And they have resources like computers that we can use, we don't have access at home.'* Only a small number of students prefer to complete homework at home because they live a reasonable distance from the school.

Students explained that some teachers in the school treated indigenous students differently. When asked to clarify the form in which this difference manifested itself, the students stated that there were stereotypical expectations of ability and performance placed on them by these teachers. Students felt that non-indigenous students were clearly favoured. Alternatively, there were very positive statements about some methods. *'... works with you and you can see him out of school and you can email him.'* *'... if you don't understand she won't like get angry and she'll keep trying to explain it better for you.'* *'... down to earth and involved with the students.'*

The students also expressed concern that they didn't know ahead what they were going to do and what was expected of them in some subjects. They said that if they were given a program they would know how to plan better. *'... teachers actually don't hand out one to the students so we don't know what we're doing until the day and like a lot of things are stressful.'* *'... if we actually had the layout we can organise our time to do all the work properly. So ... a schedule should be handed out.'*

There are a number of AIEOs in the school who are committed to supporting Aboriginal students, though the time allocated to the support of mainstream students is less than the time allocated to the specialist program students. *'I reckon there should be some more so they can get around to more of the students.'* The support provided included cultural activities, though it appeared from the conversation that

the valuing of Aboriginal culture did not extend much beyond what the AIEOs had organised. NAIDOC week was celebrated but one student explained that '*... some teachers said why can't we have NAIDOC week all year. You know they think Aboriginal culture should be the same and celebrated the whole year round*'. When asked if the selection of texts in mainstream courses included indigenous texts, the answer was negative. The school did fly a new Aboriginal flag, which had replaced an old and tattered flag at the request of the AIEOs.

When asked if the students would have taken up the opportunity to study an Aboriginal language, the students responded positively, though with a hint of embarrassment. Some students named different languages which invited laughter as the problem was – which language would be the one to learn in that area as many are represented within the community. Some students very seriously said that it was worth studying an Aboriginal language if it was taught properly, by which they meant it may not matter which one as long as there was a proper study of cultural context along with the language.

Student provided a range of responses when the conversation turned to assessment. Some students preferred working independently and enjoyed writing essays. '*Well I prefer individual work on my own. And I like essays because then I can explain myself ...*' '*... the teachers have said sometimes they know that I understand it but I have trouble writing it on paper which I think a few people have trouble with sometimes.*' Some enjoyed practical and creative types of assessment which might involve group work. The group was reasonably divided over the benefits of group work, with some students preferring it because of the opportunity to socialise while others saw group work as a problematic process due to inequity in work loads and the unfair assessment of individuals in the group.

Aspirations

Most of the students interviewed aspired to graduate with a WACE, which they saw as an important step in their future success. Only a small number of students did not think that year 11 or 12 made much difference, though these students did point out that their engagement with an alternative educational program was important to successfully achieving their chosen career.

Implications for pedagogy

The provision of more support to Aboriginal students in the mainstream is appropriate as they still feel the need for it even though they are coping. They felt that the extension of specialist support into the mainstream through an increase in the number of AIEOs would be appropriate. Some students also voiced a wish for Aboriginal teachers. When asked what they would change they said '*more Indigenous teachers*'. Students also suggested that a greater integration of Indigenous culture into mainstream education would help to build positive role models because it would make them feel their culture was being valued. Furthermore, an opportunity to learn a traditional language should be offered to students who wish to pursue this as part of their studies.

It was clear from the group dynamics that a supportive educational environment based on friendship strengthens student engagement with courses and schooling. The ability to socialise with teachers significantly increased the value of education. Students stated that they felt supported by teachers who regularly checked the progress of students, made themselves available after class, did not get frustrated by lack of student progress, cared for students, displayed humour and explained content and requirements clearly.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School K

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 100% | |
| In class exams | 60% | 40% |
| Tests (written) | 80% | 20% |
| End of term exams | | 100% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 40% | 60% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 60% | 40% |
| Group projects | 40% | 60% |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 80% | 20% |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 80% | 20% |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School L - Country

The group

There was one Year 11 student interviewed in this session. The student had been at the school since year 8 and was intending to sit for tertiary entrance. The student explained that generally the school had valued Aboriginal culture and people but also admitted that there had been some racist experiences when interacting with peers *'There are only students who count themselves as Aboriginal but I think there are others but they don't like to admit it'*. The student brushed this off by saying that racism had been delivered humorously, though the student also admitted that racism had caused some hurt and anger. *'... some of the students here ... there is actually a lot of racism but it is not directly at people. It's just as a joke. It's not that much but it's enough to make me angry and not feel accepted.'*

Curriculum and assessment

The student stated that teachers were very supportive, though a greater effort could be placed on the explaining of content in more detail as well as using concrete examples to make content more understandable. The student explained that there was no interpersonal interaction with teachers and that this situation seemed preferable. However, it seemed that the student did want to connect socially with some teachers.

The school provided its Aboriginal students with an ATA and a room within the school dedicated to the promotion of Aboriginal culture. In terms of promoting and valuing culture, the student explained that the school had invited Aboriginal Elders to address a school assembly in the past, and that it flew the Aboriginal flag. There was also evidence of Indigenous art in the administration building.

The student appeared to be reasonably proactive with regard to culture, participating in cultural activities such as a local community march for NAIDOC week. The student also expressed an interest in learning an Aboriginal language. *'I would have liked to have learned the language so I can understand some people a lot better. I liked to know what people are saying when I pass them on the street.'*

The student was very supportive of the homework program ('Follow the Dream') provided by the local community, which made it easier to complete homework or assessments because of the available facilities, resources and tutors. It was clear that obligations at home made it much more difficult to complete homework and/or assessments there.

With regard to assessment tasks, the student preferred working independently. The student enjoyed being assessed through a written format, but was not too keen on extended written assignments such as essays. The student did not like any form of oral presentation and showed some concern about possibly leaving a negative impression on people as a result of having spoken to them.

The student clearly enjoyed studying science.

Aspirations

The student had very clear aspirations to gain entry into tertiary studies and stated that a key motivation for senior secondary schooling was making the family proud. The student clearly valued education and believed that more Aboriginal students

ought to be encouraged to value and respect senior secondary schooling and graduation.

Implications for pedagogy

When asked why some Aboriginal students failed to complete secondary schooling, the student stated that these students valued having an income and having fun over school. She said that, '*... some of my friends might be dropping out next year ... they can't be bothered. Their mums and dads don't seem to value education. ... they just want to have fun.*' These students were practically minded and sought employment which involved hands-on activities and/or skills. It seems highly likely that a suite of senior secondary courses which provide an appropriate cultural education, appropriate skills for employability and/or traineeships/apprenticeships may increase the retention rates for many practically-minded Aboriginal students.

It was clear that assessment tasks could be more structured and scaffolded and that more concrete examples or illustrations would help greatly towards the development of understanding in a course/subject. It was also clear that those teachers who checked a student's comprehension and understanding of content were keeping students engaged educationally because students did not feel that they were being left behind.

The inclusion and promotion of Aboriginal culture is another important factor in fostering and maintaining Aboriginal student engagement with education. From the conversation with the student, this could take a variety of forms including offering students the opportunity to study an Aboriginal language, displaying works of art or other cultural objects and explaining their significance and striving to retain a solid number of Aboriginal students within the school. However, it is also apparent that the promotion of Aboriginal culture should be balanced with the promotion of other cultures within the school so that no group is placed within a position of shame or envy.

Data extrapolated from the responses to the written survey question on assessment types. School L

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | | 100% |
| In class exams | 100% | |
| Tests (written) | 100% | |
| End of term exams | 100% | |
| Oral presentations to a group. | | 100% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | | 100% |
| Group projects | | 100% |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 100% | |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 100% | |

* Students interpreted written assignments as including 'project' work that most liked to extended 'essays' that the majority indicated they didn't like doing.

School M – Remote school

Please note that the following data was collected in written form only, independent of the process of the sample survey sessions. It was administered by the school.

Five students were surveyed, one male and four female from year levels from 9—12.

1. Favourite subjects? Why?

Students listed art, sport, mathematics, literacy (reading and spelling) and computing as their favourite subjects. Students also studied a VET course but did not identify which one. Based on the written responses, students enjoyed their subjects because they were good at them and because the subjects were interesting and fun.

2. Best performing subject? Why?

Students tended to identify sport, literacy and computing as their best performing subjects because they interacted well with the teacher and found the content challenging and engaging.

3. Favourite assessment task?

| Tasks | Like | Dislike |
|---|------|---------|
| *Written assignments | 100% | |
| In class exams | | 100% |
| Tests (written) | | 100% |
| End of term exams | | 100% |
| Oral presentations to a group. | 50% | 50% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | 100% | |
| Group projects | 100% | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | 80% | 20% |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | 80% | 20% |

4. How would you improve the syllabus for subjects you are doing?

Students stated that improvements could be made through the provision of more resources and financial support to the school, placing a particular emphasis on improving the delivery of VET. Resources identified frequently include books and DVDs. Students also explained that more financial support was needed to improve block release for a program through Curtin University. The particulars of this program were not identified.

5. How would you improve assessment in subjects you are doing?

Students stated that their assessment schedules were very demanding and that more oral assessments would be preferred.

6. Career/job post school?

The written responses indicated that the students had a clear sense of ambition. Careers included small business person, nursing, child care and driving heavy vehicles in the mining industry.

7. Would it help to complete 11 and 12? Why?

All students agreed that the skills they learnt at school were a valuable component in the process of attaining successfully their chosen career. Mathematics (numeracy), literacy (reading and spelling) and computing were given a particularly strong emphasis.

8. Does the school support/value your culture? How? Contribute to your academic success?

Students responded very positively to this question. Students were able to speak their own language (Ngaanyatjarra) in conjunction with English, as well as express their culture through art. Students also particularly enjoyed teaching Ngaanyatjarra (language and culture) to their teachers.

Students agreed that the school did not prevent the students from engaging in 'cultural business', and that the school provided academic support to the students to ensure that they did not fall behind.

9. What could keep Aboriginal students at school?

Students suggested that the following strategies would help with the retention of indigenous students in secondary schooling:

- After-school activities as a reward, e.g. music, go-karting, computers.
- Money for camps and/or excursions, e.g. a sports clinic.
- Separate secondary students from primary students, e.g. an additional classroom so that the needs of years 9—12 are not hampered by the needs of primary students.
- Retain the good teachers in the school.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

| SUMMARY | RECOMMENDATIONS That the Curriculum Council ensures provision of: |
|---|--|
| <p>APPROPRIATENESS OF COURSES</p> <p>Students indicated a positive attitude, in general, towards the courses being studied and saw them as being relevant to their aspirations.</p> <p>There was some concern expressed in relation to the availability of courses that students were not aware of and that they (and the AIEO/ATAs) felt may be appropriate for them such as the Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies, Aboriginal Languages, English as an Additional Language or Dialect.</p> <p>It was noted that some of the activities the students were engaged with may well meet the requirements of an endorsed program and therefore contribute to the WACE.</p> <p>Some students commented adversely on the 'writing' component of the Maths in Practice course, 'We thought maths would be like, maths ...but ... you have to do little essay things'.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities for school staff to become familiar with the range of courses and their completion requirements such as assessment types in order for appropriate selections, suiting the particular cohort, to be made in conjunction with the students/parents/carers and the AIEOs/ATAs. • information so that students can be made aware of the options available and choices to be made. In this way they will be treated with respect and included in the decision making process. For example information relating to Courses, Endorsed programs, Apprenticeships, VET. • information so that care may be taken in the selection of the appropriate 'English' course. Many of the students interviewed, and their peers, speak a traditional Aboriginal language, Kriol or Aboriginal English as their first language and therefore the EAL/D course may be more appropriate than another English course. • information so that school personnel can familiarise themselves with the process relating to endorsed programs. • monitoring of the implementation of the Mathematics course in 2009 to assess the appropriateness of the course in view of the student comments. While it is still important that the students can communicate results the emphasis has shifted from lengthy explanations or paraphrasing of problems to understanding and implementing mathematical concepts and processes. |

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| <p>DO COURSES ALLOW SCHOOLS TO DEVELOP APPROPRIATE PROGRAMS?</p> <p>While the courses were generally seen to be appropriate, the way in which some learning/teaching/assessment programs had been developed and delivered was not appropriate for the culture and age/maturity of the students. <i>'... wanted our Indigenous boys to play with makeup stuff.'</i> They also said they were lost when complex/abstract material was presented lecture style but could learn when complex concepts were reduced to simple steps through concrete examples</p> <p>Students were particularly enthusiastic when the activities and texts were practical, relevant and meaningful to their lives, <i>'English is related to footy and other things'</i>.</p> <p>They liked to see appropriate cultural role models in texts and to learn more about their language and culture through their studies and to have their language validated <i>'I would have liked to have learnt ...' (her language)</i>.</p> <p>Students indicated the importance of the support of the AIEOs and ATAs and said there should be more of them and more Aboriginal teachers and that they, plus Elders should be involved in the planning as well as the learning/teaching situation. In this way they can inform the planning of culturally appropriate programs and work in mainstream as well as special programs. <i>'I reckon there should be some more so they can get around to more of the students.'</i></p> | <p>That the Curriculum Council ensures provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> models of how, in relation to implementation of the courses, that the choice of contexts, learning/assessment activities, texts and other resources be selected through discussion and team-planning with the AIEOs or ATAs to ensure cultural appropriateness and that the delivery is based on the scaffolding of concepts and knowledge through the two-way learning process. a list of suggested texts and learning resources that are inclusive of those that connect with the lives of the students and have significant Aboriginal role models portrayed. That it models how texts can be dealt with in culturally sensitive ways. models of how first language/s (Including Kriol or Aboriginal English) can be recognised and used as an important tool for all learning (particularly SAE literacy) and be validated as an important part of the learning process particularly in relation to SAE literacy and numeracy. access to PD for AIEOs, ATAs, Elders and other important community members involved in schools, so they are informed and therefore empowered as valued members of a teaching team, and models how this can be done through these PD sessions or in support material. |

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| <p>ASSESSMENT PRACTICES</p> <p>Most students didn't think that long written assignments were necessary, 'Hate that', unless it was in Year 12 and then one would have to practise them in some courses to get used to exams. In general exams were not the favoured form of assessment, '<i>... won't come to school if there's exam</i>'.</p> <p>They did question the need for lengthy written responses to assessment tasks in some courses such as Maths.</p> <p>Written assignments were preferred over essays as students interpreted these as 'project like' activities although as one student put it, '<i>... the teachers have said sometimes they know that I understand it but I have trouble writing it on paper ...</i>'. The consensus favoured one-on-one explanations to the teacher, group work, '<i>... doing group work – got no shame</i>', the practical demonstration of skills, understanding and knowledge or recorded oral work.</p> <p>Students expressed concern at not having an overview of the program of work and assessment requirements so they could plan accordingly. '<i>... we don't know what we're doing until the day ... stressful ... had the layout we can organise our time to do all the work properly.</i>'</p> | <p>That the Curriculum Council ensures provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information so that teachers can interpret the course task types and design appropriate items to suit the cohort of students for whom the teaching/learning /assessment program is designed. These need to be commensurate with the 'stage' at which the students are studying. (For example, the report genre isn't listed in the content for EAL/D until Unit 1C so therefore it would be an unrealistic expectation to ask students to write a report for a Unit 1A task type, written production, and expect a three page report with headings and cohesive paragraphing). These expectations need to be made explicit to students prior to the commencement of a program of work. • information related to alternative assessment practices (to suit the task types) and that these be explored and modelled at Council organised PD sessions or provided as consensus tasks and that models of how to scaffold tasks be provided. • clarification of the moderation requirement that schools provide ALL students with an outline of the program and assessment, for each course/program being studied, at the beginning of each semester. That the moderation process ensures that this is done and that AIEOs and ATAs are also informed of these processes. • identification of the expectations placed on students in relation to the stages/units in which they are enrolled. |

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| <p>MODIFICATION OF ASSESSMENT</p> <p>It seemed clear that what the students were saying is that they felt that the tasks required in the stage 1 units should be of a more concrete, practical, hands on, oral nature to those expected of students studying the stage 2 and 3 units.</p> | <p>That the Curriculum Council ensures provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modelling of, or the provision of samples of, a range of assessment tasks (to suit the task types) appropriate for the stage of the various course units and to suit the needs and interests of the students. That AIEOs and ATAs be further trained on developing skills to support areas of concern. |

SUMMARY OF MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the following was noted through conversations with teachers, AIEOs, ATAs,s and students prior to and following the survey session.

| SUMMARY | RECOMMENDATIONS That schools note the following. |
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| <p>ASPIRATIONS</p> <p>It must be noted that the majority of students interviewed indicated a desire to ‘matriculate’ or ‘graduate’, get the WACE.</p> <p>The main reason was to be the first in the family to do so and to be a good role model. <i>‘... I’ve seen a lot ... setting bad names for us,...prove that I’m not like that.’</i> <i>‘It would be nice to have one in the family graduate.’</i></p> <p>The students when asked what they wanted to do included the normal range from getting a job and earning money, to an apprenticeship, a dancer, working on the mines, running their own shop, to university study to be an anthropologist. In fact the aspirations expressed encompassed the range of teenager dreams.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social justice, equity issue of providing an inclusive education. That is, one that allows all students the opportunity to work towards their ‘dream’. • Curriculum Council courses providing literacy, numeracy and life skills can be teamed with endorsed programs, VET, SWL, apprenticeships to enable students’ access to achieving a WACE thus the ability to make a selection from a wider set of choices for their future. |
| <p>CAREER COUNSELLING</p> <p>While this seems to occur in mainstream classes it tends to be lacking in other ‘special programs’. Some students indicated disappointment that they weren’t aware of the options available.</p> <p>Where the EAL/D course was being implemented all round comments indicated that the students were benefiting from the emphasis on additional language/dialect learning such as the content (language system and applications, intercultural understandings and language learning and communication strategies) and suggested texts that were inclusive of other cultural role models and perspectives.</p> <p>In some instances it was clear that there was not an awareness of the differences between the English courses.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students would like career counselling for all students not just those in ‘mainstream’ programs so that all students are aware of the options available. • That school counsellors be aware of the differences between the ‘English’ courses so that they can provide appropriate advice in relation to the appropriate ‘one for students speaking a language/dialect other than SAE as their first language and who may not have developed proficiency in SAE and the ability to ‘code switch’ between languages. |

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| <p>HOMEWORK</p> <p>The majority of students indicated that doing homework was difficult unless the school made provision for it as part of the program.</p> <p>For example, after-hours sessions two or three times a week. Only a couple of students indicated such things as sport and having to work as impinging on homework while the majority explained that the concept of having ones own room, desk, access to books and a computer, a quiet environment in which to focus and no sibling or other family responsibility wasn't applicable to their cultural context. For example, <i>'A lot a people come from overcrowded houses'</i>, <i>'Lots of kids running everywhere'</i>, and <i>'... they have resources like computers that we can use, we don't have access at home'</i>.</p> <p>Where home work sessions were available there were still issues if untrained 'tutors' were employed who did things differently to teacher expectations, or staff were there just to monitor behaviour and did not have any 'subject' knowledge so therefore could not assist with subject specific questions. <i>'... they come up with a different ... differently to how our teacher does it in class.'</i> <i>'... if you get the teacher of your subject then you know you can't go wrong.'</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That many students do not have the capacity to meet homework needs out of school. • Students favour the establishment of homework programs staffed by teachers or tutors who have direct links to classroom requirements and expectations and can provide subject specific support. Perhaps on a roster basis. • 'Follow the Dream' programs are being successful in some schools and these could be used as models of best practice. • Processes of communication between classroom tutors and outside tutors, for example, common journals, may overcome the issue of inappropriate or inaccurate support being provided during homework session. |
| <p>TEACHER'S ATTITUDE</p> <p>On the whole the students indicated a level of concern relating to the attitude of teachers. Negative and positive comments ranged from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They don't know how to treat us • Sometimes I think they are scared of us – what we will do if they tell us we have to do something. • They just ignore us. • They don't respect us. • They don't expect us to do it and so we don't. • They tend to leave us alone when we should be pushed, encouraged. • Make you feel like you're wasting their | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That training in cross cultural communication, cultural awareness relating to Aboriginal culture and two-way learning methodology may engender 'best practice' and more positive results and also lead to the development of mutual respect. • There has been reported value in working with the AIEOs/ATAs/ as part of a 'team'. • That training is available to assist |

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| <p>time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yell at you. • Always helping other people. <p>to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great they know us well and if we do something that isn't right they talk to us to find out what is wrong. • Knows my family and understands my problems. • Knows my situation and has planned a special program for me. • Explains things clearly and works with the AIEO to make sure we understand things and then expects us to do it. • Cares about you in school and your outside life as well. • Will come around and try to get me back. (to school). | <p>teachers with developing an inclusive curriculum in relation to how to identify, select and devise ways of dealing with texts that may be culturally sensitive to some students. Ways to acknowledge and react to racist behaviours in the class context are also addressed.</p> |
| <p>VALUING ABORIGINAL CULTURE</p> <p>The students really enjoyed such things as NAIDOC and Harmony week but wondered why some things couldn't happen all year round.</p> <p>They have AIEOs or ATAs but were concerned that the teachers didn't value them and work with them.</p> <p>Students expressed affirmation for courses such as EAL/D, AIS, and ABL languages. Some even said that in a community with different languages represented they would be happy to learn any one – as long as Aboriginal language was being taught appropriately.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of embedding Aboriginal cultural acknowledgement in all school practices. • That visible expressions of the valuing of different cultures and in particular Aboriginal culture within the school context, for example, welcome signs, art, flags, areas within the school or sporting teams being given traditional names, affirm cultural diversity and individual identity. • That PD is available that focuses on the appropriate use of AIEO/ATAs within the classroom as valued members of the planning and implementation process in a two-way situation. • That AIEO/ATAs will be more informed and empowered if they are an integral part of the above PD process. |
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| <p>SPECIAL PROGRAMS</p> <p>Types of programs offered were mainstream and programs that are totally for Aboriginal students such as special access programs, the Clontarf Academy and Basketball for Girls.</p> <p>Most students were very positive about the benefits of working in a small group consisting of friends. They liked the focussed support they received and the way in which they were taught incorporating a valuing of them and their culture.</p> <p>Several students explained that while they were in a 'special program' it was great but if they moved back into mainstream they spoke a different language there and there was no connection.</p> <p>Apart from being with friends the students seemed to like the special programs as they were protected from racism and bullying.</p> <p><i>'In the mainstream there is a lot of bullying.'</i> <i>'By ignoring you.'</i> <i>'It's stressful making friends because most of them are white fellas.'</i> <i>'I was the only dark skin in there, ... felt left out.'</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That if special programs are put in place with the view to students being 'bridged' into mainstream the 'exiting' process will be more productive if there is clear and cohesive articulation between the two. • Whole school initiatives to combat racism of any form, so that all students have equitable access to education, are more successful than individual strategies. |
| <p>SOCIAL COHESION</p> <p>Most students acknowledged the need for strong, social cohesion through friendship which is often provided in special programs. They indicated that the teacher/student cohesion should be based on understanding and mutual respect, although as one wise student stated, 'They should be respecting us first seeing as they're the teachers ...'.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in team building, getting to know you, culturally appropriate strategies to utilise in conjunction with the AIEOs or ATAs as part of the initial steps in the process of implementing new programs may be of benefit to all concerned. |

ATTACHMENT A

Survey form

**ABORIGINAL STUDENTS
IN
SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION**

SURVEY

Male

Female

Country

Metro

Year Level: _____

1) Which of the subjects you are currently doing do you like the most? Why? ____

2) Of all your current subjects, which ones are you doing well in? Why do you think this is the case? _____

3) Which of the following assessment tasks do you like doing? Which don't you like doing? Explain why.

| Tasks | Like | Dislike | Why |
|---|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Written assignments | | | |
| In class exams | | | |
| Tests (written) | | | |
| End of term exams | | | |
| Oral presentations to a group | | | |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done | | | |
| Group projects | | | |
| Performance (drama/music/sport) | | | |
| Practical work (painting/construction) | | | |

4) Is there anything you think can be done to improve the subjects you are currently doing?

5) Is there anything you think can be done to improve the way the subjects you currently do are assessed? _____

6) What would you like to do when you leave school? _____

7) Do you think completing year 11 and 12 will help you to get there? Please explain?

8) What does the school do in relation to supporting and valuing your culture that has helped you to achieve your academic/future goals?

9) It's a fact that many Aboriginal students 'drop out' of school. In your opinion, what can be done to encourage students like them to continue and succeed at school?

ATTACHMENT B

Aggregated data

| TASKS | LIKE | DISLIKE | UNSURE |
|---|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| Written assignments (inclusive of long essays which the students didn't like to project type work) | 58% | 30% | 12% |
| In class exams | 26% | 67% | 7% |
| Tests (written) | 39% | 55% | 6% |
| End of term exams | 19% | 69% | 12% |
| Oral presentations to a group | 50% | 43% | 7% |
| Orally telling your teacher what you have learnt/done (for example explaining folio work or practical activity) | 87% | 10% | 3% |
| Group projects | 83% | 11% | 6% |
| Performance (for example, drama, music or sport) | 76% | 17% | 7% |
| Practical work (for example, painting, construction) | 76% | 13% | 11% |