



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: Case study

This case study was developed collaboratively with staff from Boopa Werem Kindergarten, Cairns. It demonstrates ways staff, parents/carers and community members work together to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's learning.

This resource relates to the audiovisual (AV) segment *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: Case study*. It is recommended that you allocate 30 minutes to view, read and reflect on these resources.

These resources support teachers to meet Standards 1, 4 and 6 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Protocols

When services are engaging with Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, their histories and their cultures, it is vital to show respect through following appropriate cultural protocols.

Protocols will vary between communities, therefore it is important to build genuine relationships with the local community and become familiar with their specific protocols.

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA) provides documents to guide people when consulting with Queensland Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individuals, groups and/or communities. These are available at:

www.datsima.qld.gov.au/atsis/everybodys-business.

Further protocols, guidelines, resources and readings are available on the QCAA website:

www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/3035.html.

Decision-making elements

Key decision-making elements detailed in the *Queensland kindergarten learning guideline* (QKLG pp.19–31) provide a framework for teachers when they plan, teach and interact intentionally, monitor, assess and reflect on children's learning.

Careful attention to each of the key elements helps teachers to create rich educational experiences that spark children's interests and enthusiasm for learning.

QCAA, 2010 Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (QKLG), p. 19

The five decision-making elements are:

- Responsiveness to children (QKLG pp.20–21)
- Building inclusive partnerships (QKLG pp.22–23)
- Creating inclusive learning environments (QKLG pp.24–25)

- Developing learning contexts (QKLG pp.26–29)
- Promoting children’s learning and development (QKLG pp.30–31).

This resource and the related AV highlight strategies that kindergarten teachers use when considering these elements in their planning and practice.

Responsiveness to children

Responsive teachers embrace the diverse social and cultural knowledge, languages and ways of knowing and being that children bring to kindergarten (QKLG, p. 20).

At Boopa Werem, staff:

- invite families to share cultural knowledge, such as traditional songs that children have talked about or sung at kindergarten, e.g. children singing ‘Tuba Nuba’
- provide resources to support children’s ideas during play.



Figure 1: Children singing ‘Tuba Nuba’, a traditional song from the Torres Strait, shared and taught by parents.

Building inclusive partnerships

Teachers focus on building genuine relationships founded on respect, empathy, consideration and effective communication with parents/carers, children, families and local community members (QKLG, p. 22).

Therefore, Boopa Werem staff:

- follow cultural protocols to connect respectfully with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to help develop staff cultural competence and to create opportunities for the organisations to contribute to children’s learning
- invite, encourage and support parents/carers and community members to be part of kindergarten decision-making processes, e.g. to be active committee members
- employ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff members who liaise with other kindergarten staff and parents/carers to ensure effective two-way communication, e.g. bus assistant talks to parents daily.
- This is shown most clearly in the AV segment *Strategies to encourage enrolment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten* www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/26494.html.



Figure 2: The kindergarten invited Raelene (parent & committee member) to teach a traditional dance from the Torres Strait Islands.

Creating inclusive learning environments

Creating inclusive environments acknowledges and values children's diverse abilities and social and cultural backgrounds. This supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to build connections between familiar ways of knowing and being, and kindergarten learning (QKLG, p. 24).

At Boopa Werem, staff:

- display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags
- display an Acknowledgement of traditional owners, developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents/carers and community members
- provide culturally appropriate resources that reflect Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures.



Figure 3: Displaying flags and acknowledging traditional owners shows Aboriginal families and Torres Strait Islander families that the kindergarten values their cultures.

This is shown most clearly in the AV segment *Welcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to kindergarten*

www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/26492.html

Developing learning contexts

Carefully planned learning contexts such as play, real-life engagements, routines and transitions build children's knowledge and skills. They also provide opportunities to help strengthen children's wellbeing, sense of identity and pride in their cultural heritage by building connections to people, place and language (QKLG, p. 26).

To carry this out, Boopa Werem staff:

- organise for kindergarten children to attend local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisation's cultural celebrations, e.g. National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day at Wuchopperen Health Service
- invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community members in to tell stories, sing songs and share cultural knowledge
- strategically display resources that reflect Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures to encourage children to investigate, question, hypothesise and wonder.



Figure 4: Displaying resources stimulates conversations and questions about their cultural context.

This is shown most clearly in the AV segment *Welcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to kindergarten*

www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/26492.html

Promoting children's learning and development

Teachers make deliberate and well-informed decisions to promote children's holistic learning and development. They also engage in intentional teaching to help build concepts and dispositions that are vital for future success (*QKLG*, p. 30).

Boopa Werem staff encourage and support the use of children's home languages — including Aboriginal English and Torres Strait Island Creole — while also helping children to develop their skills in Standard Australian English (SAE).

More information

Further information about supporting Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children is available on the QCAA website at: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/12974.html under Professional topics > Inclusion and diversity.