Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

How do you help children to develop understandings about Australia’s first peoples, their cultures, languages and connections to place?

Use the descriptions of each phase along the continuum to help determine how effectively you embed Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in your service. Reflect on where your practice sits on the continuum. Consider how you can extend your practice.

Note: You may check boxes in one or more of the phases, as you may incorporate practices that reflect different points along the continuum.

Continuum

Phases: Uninformed Aware Engaged Embedded

Uninformed phase

This involves:

☐ introducing only “exotic” aspects of the cultures

☐ taking a “tourist” or snapshot approach, e.g. examining only food or clothing

☐ focusing on activities that do not change stereotypical thinking or beliefs about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, e.g. presenting stereotypical views about the ways Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples live.

Aware phase

This involves:

☐ knowing you need to do something, but not being sure what to do

☐ knowing there are particular aspects of cultural practices and protocols to consider, but not being sure of what processes and content to include

☐ having begun accessing information and seeking ways to get started.
Engaged phase
This involves:

- planning separate experiences to build understandings about Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- working with colleagues to explore and examine best practice in this area
- involving children, families and the local community, e.g. build on interests and experiences
- involving/seeking support from available support people, e.g. an Aboriginal teacher aide, community elder or support worker, or a Torres Strait Islander teacher aide, community elder or support worker.

Embedded phase
This involves:

- building and continuing to build genuine partnerships with colleagues, children, families and the community that help you embed Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in meaningful and respectful ways
- integrating Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives throughout the year and across a wide range of learning experiences.

Focus questions
Reflect on the following questions:

1. What are your motivations for developing and implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within your program/service context?
2. What do you know about your local Aboriginal community or Torres Strait Islander community and/or how can you find out more?
3. What are the protocols for engaging with local Aboriginal families and community members and Torres Strait Islander families and community members?
4. How do you ensure the representations and ideas children explore about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not based on stereotypes?
5. How do you help children to understand that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples are different, and that they have diverse connections to their environment and language?
6. How do you help children to understand the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in the past and present and in our future?
7. How can you move a step closer to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives authentically within your program?

Reference
Adapted from: Department of Education and the Arts, ‘Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools’, Queensland Government