



Policy

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First Nations Education

Purpose

This policy will provide direction to the Diocese of Cairns Catholic Education Community for the continuous improvement of educational outcomes for First Nations students, as well as all students understanding, valuing and respecting First Nations cultures, histories, languages and spiritualities.

Policy

The Diocese of Cairns Catholic Education Community will:

- commit to providing quality education, grounded in research and evidence based best practice, that supports wellbeing and learning for First Nations students
- maintain cultural integrity in teaching First Nations cultures, histories, languages and spiritualities
- provide culturally safe places of mutual respect, learning, growing, and belonging.

Rationale

In addressing the First Nations people at Alice Springs in 1986, Pope John Paul II said:

“You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others”¹

“We are guided by a relationship of high expectations, mutual respect, and genuine engagement with the two distinct First Nation Peoples: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Our shared commitment to closing the gap is a natural extension of the dream this Government has for every Australian – safety, security, prosperity, and a fair go for all.” Turnbull (2018)

The Diocese of Cairns Catholic Education Vision “is to offer quality Catholic Education so that each person may know and come to identify more fully with the Living Spirit of Christ.”

Cairns Catholic Education Community Strategic Directions 2016-2019 identifies our moral imperative to improve wellbeing and learning for all students. This is evidenced by our strategic directions which call us to have preference for the poor and marginalised. Contributing to a more socially just world ensures the common good for all in our community.

This policy will enable all First Nations students in the Diocese of Cairns Catholic Education Community to achieve their full learning potential, be empowered to shape their own futures, and to be supported to embrace their culture and identity as Australia’s First Nations peoples.

This policy assists in a system response in addressing the educational disparity between First Nations students and other Australian students, providing young people with the skills necessary to participate fully in society and to determine their own futures. It will guide effective teaching of First Nations histories, cultures, languages and spiritualities in the spirit of reconciliation for all.

¹ Cfr. John Paul II, Pilgrimage in Australia Address of John Paul II to The Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Blatherskite Park, Alice Spring (Australia), 29 November 1986

Consequences

Through shared responsibility and accountability, effective procedures are in place across the Cairns Catholic Education Community fostering the domains and descriptors outlined in the School Effectiveness Framework to have:

- A strong improvement agenda for First Nations education grounded in evidence from research and best practice and expressed in term of improvements in measurable outcomes
- Focussed analysis and discussions of First Nations student academic, attendance, behavioural and wellbeing data to inform performance and measure growth across the system
- Culturally safe environments which promote community partnership with parents, parish, and the wider communities to enhance student spirituality, wellbeing, and learning
- Effective stewardship of resources which aligns local and system priorities, focussing on just, equitable, and responsible decision-making and allocation
- Flexible structures and processes that enable schools to respond appropriately and effectively to the needs of First Nations students
- A culture of continuous professional improvement for First Nations education that includes on the job learning, collegial feedback, mentoring and coaching arrangements
- An active focus on the cross-curriculum priority of First Nations histories and cultures embedded in the systemic delivery of the Australian Curriculum
- Research and evidence-based practices that promote differentiation to support and monitor the progression of First Nations students, identifying their individual learning needs and tailoring the learning activities to their level of readiness
- Effective pedagogical practices including culturally responsive pedagogies, grounded in research and evidence based, to ensure First Nations students are engaged, challenged, and learning successfully
- School community partnerships fostering the engagement of First Nations families and communities to improve opportunities and outcomes of First Nations students
- Evidence based practices in place to effectively transition students at appropriate transition points

Reflection

[Closing the Gap Report 2020](#)

[National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy](#)

[Gonski Report](#)

[School Effectiveness Framework](#)

[Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#)

See also (Related Policies and Guidelines)

Policy: Inclusive Education