

Leonora District High School Cultural Considerations

It's every staff member's responsibility to ensure our classroom practice is Culturally Responsive. The integration of the Aboriginal Cultural Standard Framework (ACSF) is embedded in our school planning (school and business plan). This addresses the needs of our school and ensures a culturally responsive safe environment for all our students. Please familiar yourself with all 3 documents.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practice is every staff members' business.

AITSL Standard 1: Know students and how they learn

Focus Area 1.4: Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

AITSL Standard 2: Know content and how to teach

Focus Area 2.4: Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

Acknowledgement of Country

To be included to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land. It can be performed by anyone Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal. It is about paying a meaningful respectful acknowledgement to the local custodians of the land in which you are meeting and the significant contributions elders past present and emerging to education and the connection to that land in which you are meeting. *'I would like to acknowledge the Wangkatja people, the traditional owners and custodians of the land in which we meet. I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing connection to culture and the contribution they make to the life of this region. We pay our respects to the elders past, present and emerging and to their ongoing contribution to the education of all Australians.'*

Welcome to Country

Must be an Aboriginal person who is a Traditional Owner of the area in which you are meeting.

It's usually given by an Elder who has the authority to do Welcome to Country.

Welcome to Country may be given in language and then translated into English. It may incorporate stories, song, dances and smoking ceremonies.

It is the Traditional Owners welcoming people onto their land.

The Birthday analogy

The Welcome to Country is like a person hosting a birthday party and inviting you to it.

An Acknowledgement to Country is the people who attend the party thanking the host for having them.

When should each be used?

The Department supports the acknowledgement of the traditional custodian through an Acknowledgment of Country at school assemblies, staff meetings and other internal events, as this demonstrates respect for Aboriginal cultures and heritage.

As a general rule, if people are travelling from areas outside the location of the event, it is appropriate to have a Welcome to Country. This is particularly important if Aboriginal people are in attendance, as the tradition for a welcome is to provide safety while on someone else's country.

If you are ever unsure of these protocols or are wanting an Elder for an event it's important to ask the schools' AIEO's. In our school Fifi Harris or Dianne Vincent will be able to help you.

Cultural protocols

- Protocols are appropriate ways of behaving, communicating and showing respect for diversity of history and culture
- This involves appreciation of the knowledge, standing and status of people within both the local Aboriginal community and the school community.
- In establishing a partnership between schools and Aboriginal communities it is especially important that protocols are acknowledged and respected.

Local protocols

- Although names and images of deceased people were not to be spoken or shown in the past, this protocol is changing and now some local people will say and show these images with respect and are generally comfortable for it to occur.
- Some Aboriginal people will not make eye contact when they are speaking with you. This does not mean they are not listening to you or deliberately being rude. Be aware of the social cues and respond and adapt the conversation taking into account their body language. This is relevant to community and the students in your classes.
- Be aware of your body language. Negative body language, tone of voice can be taken as disrespectful. Avoid confrontation (in your face) it is much better to walk and talk or sit side by side to have a chat about a concern or issue. 'Seek to understand before being understood'
- Give, take up, thinking time before when asking questions.
- Staff and students should dress respectfully without wearing revealing clothes. This is important within the school but also when out and about in the community. (ie Short skirts, shorts, revealing breasts or midriffs)

Do's and Don'ts of working in an Aboriginal Community

- Embrace the opportunity to learn about the local languages, culture and history. Leonora DHS students learn the Wangkatja language. As a teacher try to learn with your students.
- Make the most of Bush days and Two-Way Science, integrate this learning across your teaching program
- Meet local Elders and significant families. Go on home visits with Dianne. Learn where your students are coming from, but do not make preconceived judgments.
- Share who you are through sharing your story, your interests and your hobbies.
- Building positive relationships takes time and patience.
- Respect does not come naturally as you will earn the respect and trust of the community by your actions in school and in the community. Once this trust is lost it is extremely difficult to re-establish.
- First impressions are extremely important. The community does not distinguish between work time and private time. If you are in community, you are seen as a teacher in the school 24/7.

Relationships – Kinship

- Family relationships and kinship can be very complicated and may differ each community. For some areas are stronger than others.
- Aboriginal communities are made up of a number of family networks. These family networks can have strong connections to families in communities within the geographical area. There are areas where some students will not go to, as their parents will not go to that place.
- Aboriginal people are part of wider family networks. Children learn from a very young age about their aunties and uncles, cousins and how they are connected and the appropriate way to address their relatives.
- It can be very confusing to understand these family relationships when essentially children can identify with having several mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, nanas and pops. Biological cousins can be called sister or brother, uncles can be fathers ETC

Implications for the classroom

- There can be a complex hierarchy to relationships that can have implications in the classroom. EG if there is a child in the room with an older sibling, or aunty that child may feel reluctant to answer questions or participate in activities as they have to allow the person with more authority to answer first. This may also happen in community meetings.
- When consulting with community on cultural knowledge, it is important to find out who the right person for a particular issue is. Not everyone holds the same authority and/or cultural knowledge. If in doubt ask Fifi or Dianne.
- There is a hierarchy in families that doesn't necessarily come with age, it more comes with position in family and who has had knowledge and authority passed onto them by elders.
- Take the time to get to know students, families and community and how everyone is connected.
- Work with the community to find out what they want for their children for their school.
- Challenge explicit racism. Make it clear that those comments will never be tolerated. So many teachers let it slide, or ignore it.
- Challenge covert racism and ignorance of your students and your colleagues. Eg
 - "but their not really black or Aboriginal"
 - "they're only a quarter Aboriginal" Use the cup of tea analogy
- Have those robust conversations with your students, as often they have the biases and inherent racism which they have learned from home. Remember this was never taught to the generations before them

DON'T's

- When heading out on country to explore and visit places, it is always good to ask the local people as there are some spots which are deemed sacred and should not be visited.
- Be respectful of places you cannot go. Men's business, Women's business Sorry business areas.
- When out on country do not remove things such as rocks without permission to do so.
- Always ask for permission to take and post photos of people
- Do not judge students, families and community on your own values or upbringing. Be open minded, as learning is always 2 ways. Be respectful of everyone's values system

Building Respectful Relationships

- Some Aboriginal people find direct questioning offensive. Finding out information should be done through reciprocal sharing. Take time to yarn first.
- It is important to listen and be respectful. If there is information they do not want to share, then they will not speak. It may also be that they are not the right person to be answering that question.
- Seek to understand before trying to be understood
- Always give wait time when asking a question (in the classroom and talking with community) Repeated questioning can be seen as offensive. It may be that they may think things over and then come back to you with answers.
- Always keep interactions calm and positive – especially in negative situations.
- Students, families and community love to find out about you. Sharing photos is a good way to begin making connections.
- Find things you have in common, football teams, love of dogs, ETC

The experience of working and living in an Aboriginal community will be a highlight of your career. Embrace this experience, take the opportunity to learn from our community. We have an obligation to teach the Australian Curriculum but we also have the obligation to learn the history, culture and language and immerse yourselves in this 2-way learning. Take the time to learn.

Any remember If you have any questions or doubts ASK. There are no silly questions.