

Hon Susan Close MP

Minister for Education and Child Development

Monday, March 6, 2017

Aboriginal Education Strategy – helping our students to complete Year 12

Encouraging a greater number of Aboriginal students to complete high school and excel academically is the aim of a renewed strategy involving schools, students and their families.

The launch of the SACE Board Aboriginal Education Strategy (2017-2021), at today's SACE Leaders Forum for South Australian principals and school leaders, builds on previous plans to support young Aboriginal students to aspire to complete Year 12.

The previous strategy, SACE Board Aboriginal Education Strategy (2012-2016) contributed to more than doubling the number of students completing school since 2011 (when 144 Aboriginal students completed their SACE – to a record 322 students last year).

The revised strategy highlights the successful practices which proved to make a difference in the number of students staying in school, excelling academically and in community life, and, critically, going on to complete the SACE.

The strategy was developed in collaboration with the SACE Board Aboriginal Education Strategy Steering Committee, the SACE Board Aboriginal Strategy Education Working Party, and Aboriginal and school communities.

Background

There has been strong progress since the previous SACE Board Aboriginal Education Strategy (2012-2016).

Since the introduction of the new SACE in 2011, there has been an average 20 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of Aboriginal SACE completers. This is a significant achievement for teachers, schools, and the community.

Emerging strategies adopted by schools, which have been identified as demonstrating consistent success in supporting Aboriginal students to achieve their SACE, included:

- fostering Aboriginal student leadership and encouraging contribution to the school community;
- recognising that high expectations must begin in the early years and be maintained and reinforced throughout the years;
- emphasising the importance of positive teacher and student relationships;

- tutoring and mentoring by past students;
- enhancing students' sense of worth, connection, and belonging by providing students and families with an opportunity to share and celebrate their culture; and
- adopting a formal family engagement policy, with safe and inviting access to dedicated forums for communication and community consultation.

Quotes attributable to Education and Child Development Minister Susan Close

For a young Aboriginal student, achieving the SACE qualification not only provides greater access to further education, training and employment, but can lead to greater personal well-being, financial security and enhanced capacity for critical and creative thinking.

The number of Aboriginal students completing the SACE each year is growing, however when compared to completion rates of non-Aboriginal people, the gap is still unacceptable.

We must have high expectations and aspirations for our Aboriginal students and put more effort into planning how each individual can achieve their own goals.

This renewed strategy aims to prepare Aboriginal students to achieve their SACE while maintaining their Aboriginal culture and identity and to succeed in the community.

The strategy aims to achieve this by ensuring we create schools that encourage Aboriginal students and their families to share and celebrate Aboriginal culture and contribute to school communities.

Quotes attributable to University of Adelaide's Dean of Indigenous Research and Education Strategy, Professor Shane Hearn

The SACE Board Aboriginal Education Strategy 2017-2020 is an opportunity to strengthen pathways to complete senior secondary education, but it is also a challenge.

I welcome the strategy and look forward to supporting its number of activities for the next four years.