



AIEF Compendium of best practice for achieving successful outcomes with Indigenous students in Australian boarding schools



AIEF Compendium Shares Indigenous Education Best Practice with Boarding Schools Nationwide

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In May the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) launched a ground-breaking guide to best practice in Indigenous education, the AIEF Compendium of best practice for achieving successful outcomes with Indigenous students in Australian boarding schools.

The AIEF Compendium draws on interviews, surveys and discussions with over 160 educators at more than 50 leading Australian schools to identify the critical factors influencing successful outcomes – Year 12 completion and career transitions – among Indigenous boarding students.

The result is a practical guide intended to assist schools to establish a successful Indigenous education program, and to provide advice that can assist schools with established programs to fine-tune their strategies.

The AIEF Compendium is the first of its kind and a first for AIEF – a private sector-led, non-profit organisation established in 2008 to provide scholarships that enabled leading schools to scale their Indigenous education programs and create more opportunities for Indigenous boarding students.

In the years since, AIEF has grown to offer over 500 scholarships per annum and deliver mentoring and career support to the students and graduates supported by its programs.

AIEF expanded its network of partner schools and colleges to accommodate this growth and began to observe common approaches and practices that were fundamental to the success of the Indigenous education programs at these schools.

For the most part, these programs developed the practices fundamental to their success in isolation, through trial and error, over many years. Despite the difficulties inherent in this process, many were achieving retention and Year 12 completion rates in excess of 90%.

AIEF decided to embark on the Compendium project after considering what could be achieved if the expertise within these programs was collected, collated and shared with boarding schools across the country.

AIEF commenced research in 2013 with funding from HSBC Bank. One of the most striking outcomes of this research was the consistency across schools regarding the most important drivers of a successful Indigenous education program.

Views and approaches towards these 'critical success factors' varied widely, but their importance in achieving successful outcomes with Indigenous students was almost universally recognised:

Leadership commitment: a genuine and personal commitment from the school leadership to the program.

Resourcing: Indigenous education programs must be resourced sufficiently and effectively to ensure success and sustainability.

Enrolment considerations for scholarship recipients: in particular, ensuring that students most likely to succeed receive the opportunities available, with a focus on students with enthusiasm, aspirations, parental support and a positive attitude to learning.

A welcoming environment: a supportive and welcoming school environment that is genuine, authentic and entrenched, rather than purely symbolic.

Relationships: relationships with Indigenous students, their families, their communities, with the broader school community, with external organisations and other schools are critical and far-reaching. Effective communication that is regular, respectful, open and inclusive is at the heart of these partnerships and relationships.

School structures and frameworks: these need to be student-centred, carefully con-

ceived and implemented to ensure the right staff are in the right roles and have the resources needed to do their jobs effectively.

Learning and transition support: where needed, additional support for Indigenous students needs to be targeted, responsive to students' needs and focused on ensuring that all students complete Year 12 and successfully transition to a sustainable career and further study.

The schools that contributed to the AIEF Compendium developed an understanding of these critical success factors through trial and error. The AIEF Compendium sets out to equip schools with the expertise developed by these programs and in so doing, hopes to help schools achieve outcomes in years that might otherwise take decades.

AIEF will distribute copies of the AIEF Compendium to schools across Australia, and because 'best practice' in this field is constantly evolving, AIEF has also established an interactive portal, the AIEF Compendium Online, where educators can continue to develop and share best practice in real time.

Educators can sign up at compendium.aief.com.au to read and respond to the AIEF Compendium; connect with other professionals from Australian boarding schools; blog about experiences and initiatives within their own programs; and ask and answer questions in the discussion forum.

To ensure quality and relevance of community content, membership of the portal is restricted to education professionals with a current .edu.au email address.

Just as AIEF Scholarships enable individual schools to scale their programs, the AIEF Compendium has the potential to scale opportunities and success rates in boarding schools across Australia to the benefit of thousands more students than the 7,000 AIEF aims to support through its programs.



COMPENDIUM Online

A resource of best practice for achieving successful outcomes with Indigenous students in Australian boarding schools