

Solid whole-school ethos

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An ethos informs the vision, direction and thinking of a school. A solid school ethos is developed and sustained in collaboration with Aboriginal members of the school community.

In schools with **Yamaji** (Aboriginal) students an ethos that celebrates the contributions of the local Aboriginal culture to your school community would strengthen the relationship between Aboriginal students and their families and the school. For example, the school has an identifiable Aboriginal presence that is celebrated and acknowledged.

The reflection questions below link to the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) Key Element, 'School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare' (DEST, 2003).

Reflection questions for a solid school ethos

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| • Does the planning committee include Aboriginal representatives to progress Aboriginal worldviews within the school? |
| • Are Aboriginal staff regularly consulted to ensure that school bullying guidelines and practices are consistent with Aboriginal worldviews? |
| • Has the school community clearly identified its philosophy and purpose relating to bullying and social relationships? |
| • Does the school ethos and environment provide safety, security and support for its Aboriginal staff, Aboriginal students and Aboriginal families? |
| • Is the school ethos developed in consideration of local Aboriginal worldviews? |
| • Is there a strong sense of connectedness to the school that is fostered by positive communication, relationships and values shared by the whole school community? |
| • Is there a clear understanding that bullying or violence is not accepted in any form in the school environment? |
| • Are Aboriginal students valued as important participants in creating safe and supportive school environments, and are they actively involved in the promotion of the school ethos? |

Is there a strong ethos that it is always right to ask for help when you can't deal with a situation yourself?

Developing a solid school ethos

Schools that work towards achieving a solid school ethos promote the wellbeing of all school community members and are characterised by care and respect for one another. Research has found that both students who bully and those who are bullied are likely to feel lonely, unhappy and unsafe at school. A welcoming environment for Aboriginal children and their families contributes to perceptions of tolerance and of being valued. This ethos also contributes to increased participation of Aboriginal families, trust in the school environment, and a sense of mutual concern.

Solid school activity

The principal, **AIEOs** (ATAs or AEWs), teachers, parents, carers and students play an important role in addressing bullying in the school community. It is especially important for principals, teachers and other school staff to be supportive of Aboriginal education, by:

- **respecting** and **supporting** the role of **AIEOs** (ATAs or AEWs)
- implementing **cultural security** professional development for ALL staff
- including more cultural content in the curricular (with guidance from **AIEOs**, ATAs or AEWs)

Principals need to regularly liaise with **AIEOs** (ATAs or AEWs), who play a very important role in addressing bullying prevention and management in the school community. **AIEOs** (ATAs or AEWs) can be actively involved in:

- school planning
- improving school attendance (encourage kids to attend school, come with kids to classroom, check the park to collect kids etc)
- **yarning** circles with Aboriginal kids
- enhancing social skills and problem solving
- liaising with teachers
- working with the Principal, teachers and carers to address behaviour management issues

Enhancing solid cultural identity of Aboriginal students

Enhancing cultural identity of Aboriginal students is especially important in facilitating a solid school environment and ethos. School/staff can do this by:

- taking Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students on off-site activities to develop and strengthen a sense of community and cultural pride
- providing incursions/excursions for students to learn about or celebrate Aboriginal performing arts such as dancing and didgeridoo playing
- using existing events/celebrations to increase cultural awareness, including
 - NAIDOC Week
 - Land and Sea program
 - Sorry Day
- using local community mentors to talk about journeys to success (e.g. mechanic, hairdresser, nurse etc – try to have a broad range to appeal to all students)
- ensuring there are up-to-date and accurate books in the library about Aboriginal culture
- including more Aboriginal history and culture in the curriculum using the Aboriginal curriculum frameworks

Yamaji wangi recommendations from Sharing Days

- ensure principals are supportive of the **Solid Kids, Solid Schools** aims and strategies
- promote solid behaviours throughout the school (e.g. showing respect etc.)
- establish a Bullying Prevention Action group
- organise lunchtime activities so the kids don't get bored and act up
- have teachers wear bright-coloured vests when on duty (in larger schools AIEOs, ATAs and AEWs could wear a different coloured vest to more easily identify them to Aboriginal students)
- initiate breakfast programs (impromptu or organised)
- start earth worm farming project (learning about worming and selling fertiliser)
- develop effective and appropriate mobile phone guidelines
- implement effective training and support for school psychologist
- make school bus drivers aware of issues and train them to deal with issues (also allow music in the bus to create a more relaxed environment)
- consider the use of school-based police officers