



Guide for getting started

Aboriginal English storybooks promote success and enthusiasm for learning. When Aboriginal English becomes part of the students' classroom experience, the benefits go beyond their transition to speaking and writing in Standard Australian English.

Aboriginal English storybooks engage with the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*:

- » Relationships – Establish the team
- » Leadership – Conduct school self-assessment and establish an action plan
- » Leadership – Build the capacity of staff
- » Resources – Plan the Aboriginal English Storybook project
- » Teaching and learning environment – Create Aboriginal English storybooks
- » Relationships – Showcase the achievements with the school and local community

Aboriginal English is an internationally recognised dialect that has its own rules, structures and concepts. It is spoken by most Aboriginal students.

Using Aboriginal English enables students to show what they can do to demonstrate success in writing and provides opportunities for school leaders and teachers to ensure their students know that they value their students' home language. This increases Aboriginal learners' enthusiasm for schooling and further education.

The use of Aboriginal English storybooks promotes success and builds positive perceptions about Aboriginal learners' abilities, language and culture across the school community.

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The use of Aboriginal English storybooks promotes success and builds positive perceptions about Aboriginal learners’ abilities, language and culture across the school community.

Guide for getting started

Why introduce Aboriginal English storybooks

Aboriginal English storybooks promote success and enthusiasm for learning. Aboriginal English is an internationally recognised dialect that has its own rules, structures and concepts. It is spoken by most Aboriginal students. When Aboriginal English becomes part of the students' classroom experience, the benefits go beyond their transition to speaking and writing in Standard Australian English (SAE). Such classroom experience has positive effects on attendance and performance.

The *Western Australian Curriculum: Student Diversity statement* explains that:

All students from Kindergarten to their final year of secondary schooling in Western Australia have a right to an education that is equitable and embraces diversity. This right is enshrined in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. It is also a feature of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians which is central to the Australian Curriculum...

This education must be inclusive of students' individual strengths and needs. Differences in terms of characteristics such as ethnicity, language (linguistic background), culture, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation or geographic location should not be allowed to detract from a student's access to the high-quality education that is their right...

School Curriculum and Standards Authority

Meeting the standards

All schools are required to enact the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework* and are encouraged to utilise the *Capability Framework: Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners* (the Capability Framework).

The Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework supports schools to gain cultural competence in order to engage effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities.

There are five standards that are developed across the four continuum stages that move from Cultural Awareness, Cultural Understanding, and Cultural Competence to Cultural Responsiveness. The five standards are Relationships, Leadership, Teaching, Learning environment and Resources. These reflect the *School Improvement and Accountability Framework* pre-requisites for, and are enablers of, successful students

School leaders and teachers use these frameworks to inform whole-school practices and determine staff professional learning needs.

The *Capability Framework* supports teachers to cater for the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to ensure they can access the Western Australian Curriculum. It focuses on language and literacy development, alongside the development of cultural competence as set out in the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*.

Aboriginal English storybooks develop:

- » Capability 1 – Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners and understand EAL/D learning
- » Capability 3 – Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners
- » Capability 4 – Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners
- » Capability 7 – Engage in respectful and reciprocal cross-cultural relationships.

As these capabilities are developed, the following performance descriptors listed under each standard of the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework are being addressed:

- » Relationships
 - Staff engage professionally with local Aboriginal community members
 - Staff establish and maintain positive relationships with Aboriginal students, parents and families
 - Staff engage professionally with local Aboriginal community members
 - Staff provide Aboriginal students, their parents and families and local Aboriginal community members with leadership opportunities
 - Staff broaden their knowledge and improve practices in Aboriginal education.

- ☒ Leadership
 - School leaders develop a clear vision for the teaching and learning of Aboriginal students
 - School leaders build staff capacity for effective teaching of Aboriginal students
 - School leaders support innovation and change in Aboriginal education.
- ☒ Teaching
 - Teachers know how culture and experiences shape the learning of each Aboriginal student
 - Teachers know the curriculum content and how best to teach it to Aboriginal students
 - Teachers plan for and implement effective teaching practices for Aboriginal students.
- ☒ Learning environment
 - Staff support Aboriginal students to feel a sense of belonging and connection to the school
 - Staff involve Aboriginal students, their parents and families to establish a physical environment that is welcoming for Aboriginal students
 - Staff work with Aboriginal students, their parents and families to establish shared expectations and responsibility for attendance and behaviour
 - Staff establish a supportive and safe learning environment for Aboriginal students.

- ☒ Resources
 - Staff acknowledge and value the expertise of Aboriginal staff
 - School leaders allocate staff to support the learning needs of individual Aboriginal students
 - School leaders target the learning needs of individual Aboriginal students when allocating financial resources
 - Staff use culturally appropriate education resources to strengthen Aboriginal student engagement and learning.

Promoting cross-cultural understanding and community collaboration

Aboriginal students bring alternative world experience to school and storybooks in Aboriginal English provide opportunities for Aboriginal students to share these experiences using their well-developed oral narrative skills. This also helps non-Aboriginal students and teachers to understand and gain insights into the rich and complex cultural traditions and world views of speakers of Aboriginal English.

Aboriginal staff are crucial in supporting non-Aboriginal staff to value, recognise and interpret Aboriginal English. Their assistance is also vital in creating the understandings necessary for building effective, collaborative relationships between staff, students, families and communities.

Promoting a two-way approach in culturally responsive schools

A two-way approach involves Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and educators mutually exploring their cultural, linguistic and conceptual differences. It encompasses community input into program development, ensuring Aboriginal relevance and appropriateness of pedagogy.

Students' achievements are influenced by the language of instruction which is usually provided in SAE. This favours a more analytical and linear way of expression whereas Aboriginal English represents time and space in a more associative and integrated way.

A two-way approach to teaching and learning explores the complexity of both forms of English in classroom instruction and talk. This enables all students in the classroom to share and build on each other's knowledge.

Utilising and validating these different ways of expression improves Aboriginal students' engagement with the Western Australian Curriculum. This is why recognising Aboriginal English as a valid and complex language is so important.

Enhancing learning

Research shows that students who are able to use their home language when learning SAE, outperform peers in English-only programs because they use their home language in cognitive processing. Being able to utilise knowledge as interpreted in the home language increases the speed of learning another language. Aboriginal students draw on their own cultural conceptualisations to make sense of SAE. Effective teachers ensure their students understand the way words and concepts are used in SAE as these may be differently related in Aboriginal English.

Students benefit when exposed to a new language as this develops:

- » lateral and critical thinking
- » general intelligence
- » cognitive flexibility
- » analytical and divergent thinking skills
- » paralinguistic competence, all of which are essential for critical literacy.

Facilitating literacy development

Linguistically and culturally familiar reading materials and resources that are relevant to the individuals' learning needs and interests promote the development of literacy skills. When Aboriginal English speaking students are provided with Aboriginal English texts, they are able to:

- » access the language that carries their cultural heritage
- » use their own thought patterns freely when trying to write down sentences
- » use the language that describes their own experience and world view
- » make the right predictions to help them read.

Developing effective code-switching skills

Code-switching is the ability to move between SAE and Aboriginal English according to context, purpose and audience. Code-switching has positive impacts on bidialectal competence and literacy development of learners. When code-switching becomes a conscious skill, students are able make connections between their languages and are more engaged and willing to take risks with the application of the new language across learning areas.

Getting started – Set up a process

As they learn to recognise the importance of their students' first language, teachers develop awareness about the need to engage in deeper analysis of language difference and the benefits of working two-way. This project supports staff to develop their knowledge and ability to either establish or continue to build on ways of working two-way.

There are six steps in the process of creating Aboriginal English storybooks. Resources referred to are available online through the EAL/D website - [Teaching and Learning Resources for EAL/D Aboriginal Students](#) or by contacting the [Statewide Services Resource and Information Centre](#).

The steps engage with the standards as set out in the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*.

Co-leaders direct team members through:

1. Relationships – Establish the team
2. Leadership – Conduct school self-assessment and establish an action plan
3. Leadership – Build the capacity of staff
4. Resources – Plan the Aboriginal English Storybook project
5. Teaching and learning environment – Create Aboriginal English storybooks
6. Relationships – Showcase the achievements with the school and local community

The two-way team might include school leaders, teachers and at least one Aboriginal person who may be a member of school, Regional Education Office staff, the community, or a secondary student.

The team requires co-leaders one of which must be Aboriginal. Their role is to form positive cross-cultural relationships in order to build:

- » awareness and understanding of Aboriginal English and how it differs from SAE,
- » awareness of the importance and advantages of working two-way,
- » the capacity and confidence of AIEOs to share their knowledge and teach about meaning and structure of Aboriginal English,
- » opportunities for increased links with parents, families and community,
- » students code-switching skills between Aboriginal English and SAE,
- » enthusiasm in Aboriginal students' to read and write,
- » a repertoire of strategies that improve Aboriginal students' educational outcomes.

Professional learning resources listed support the team to lead the development of knowledge and skills of staff to work two-way.

1. Establish the team

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
<p>Team members who include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ school leaders ☒ Aboriginal people and teachers as co-leaders. 	<p>The project will benefit when the team consists of two or more Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Team members should choose their level of participation based on their comfort level and expertise.</p>	<p>Read introduction in Tracks to Two-Way Learning Facilitators Guide pp12-14.</p>	<p>For advice and recommendations contact the Principal Consultants for EAL/D and/or Aboriginal Education at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ the Statewide Services Centre ☒ the local Regional Education Office.
<p>Co-leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ At least one Aboriginal project leader ☒ One non-Aboriginal project leader <p>Read and discuss how <i>Our Views, Our Ways</i> will be incorporated in Step two: Establish an action plan to build the capacity of staff.</p>	<p>The project will benefit from well established relationships between the co-leaders and the community.</p>	<p>Read: Tracks to Two-Way Learning Focus Area 2 - Our Views, Our Ways Background Reading pp 8-20</p>	<p>Engage with community members to gain and incorporate local perspectives.</p>
<p>The team requires knowledge about Aboriginal English.</p>	<p>Co-leaders may require professional learning to build their knowledge.</p>	<p>Tracks to Two-Way Learning resource</p>	<p>Enrol in professional learning: Professional Learning Information System (PLIS) calendar.</p> <p>Seek advice from local Aboriginal staff.</p> <p>Request information from staff with relevant expertise and knowledge on Aboriginal English in the Statewide Services Centre.</p>
<p>Engage in professional conversations with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff.</p>	<p>Relevant knowledge must include input from Aboriginal people in the local community.</p> <p>View the four minute film clips to</p>	<p>Create lists of words and sentence structures with examples of local Aboriginal English. This may be used as a reference for environmental print.</p>	<p>Join a Connect Community.</p> <p>Engage with the EAL/D Teacher Development Schools (TDSs).</p>

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
	<p>provide staff with an introduction to Aboriginal English.</p>	<p>Access resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ways of Being, Ways of Talk (DVD) » Two-Way English (Chapter 3) » Solid English » Deadly Ways to Learn. » Understanding Aboriginal English » Associating pidgin, creole and Aboriginal English » Splash ABC 	<p>Call and/or visit the Statewide Services Resource and Information Centre.</p> <p>Access these resources through Curriculum Support on the Education Department's intranet.</p> <p>Contact the Department of Education for sourcing hard copies of these resources</p>

2. Conduct school self-assessment and establish an action plan

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
<p>Evaluate current processes using the two-way action plan proforma, the Analytical Model and Tools pp 15-21 and the Site evaluation Matrix pp 37-112, in <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Facilitators Guide</i>.</p> <p>This will result in the establishment of a two-way action plan.</p>	<p>The two-way action plan is a component of the <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Analytical Model and Tools</i>. Two-way teams should familiarise themselves with this model and tools by reading <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Facilitators Guide: The Analytical Model and Tools</i> pp 15-25.</p> <p>Two-way action plans utilise knowledge of Aboriginal Language and bidialectalism.</p>	<p>Begin by reading <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Facilitators Guide</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Leading Two-Way Change pp 22-33 <p>Use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The Analytical Model and Tools pp 15-21, » Site evaluation Matrix pp 37-112, » Two-Way Action Plan proforma p 26. 	<p>The <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning</i> resource can be accessed through Curriculum Support on the Education Department's intranet.</p> <p>Call and/or visit the Statewide Services Resource and Information Centre.</p> <p>Contact the Department of Education for a hard copy version.</p>
<p>Seek endorsement of the two-way action plan by school leadership team.</p>	<p>Endorsement is more easily obtained when the two-way action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » takes a whole-school approach » takes account of the professional learning time available to staff » is aligned to the school's strategic plan, and » has measurable milestones set over a longer period of time. 	<p>The milestones can be developed using outcomes listed in the <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Facilitators Guide: Stage Overviews</i> pp 30-33.</p> <p>Include the action plan in the school Strategic, Operational and Classroom planning</p>	<p>Some schools may require significant change and the leadership team should determine a timeline for taking action</p> <p>For additional information on school self-assessment: download modules from Connect Resources on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Support for school leadership.</p>

3. Build the capacity of staff

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
<p>Identify what teachers know and need to learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aboriginal English » Two-way learning 	<p>Oral and/or written examples provided by Aboriginal English speaking students can be useful to gauge teachers' understandings.</p>	<p>Use <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Facilitators Guide: Site Evaluation Matrix: Professional Practice</i> pp 37-53.</p>	<p>The <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Facilitators Guide: Site Evaluation Matrix: Professional Practice</i> section lists resources available to support professional learning.</p>
<p>Provide professional learning about Aboriginal English and two-way learning.</p>	<p>Confident co-leaders may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Lead school-based professional learning that includes the perspectives provided by local Aboriginal people, » Lead formal and informal forums that engage staff in relevant professional conversations, and » encourage staff to enrol in available professional learning and/or access resources to build their knowledge and understanding. 	<p>Access resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <i>The Tracks to Two-Way Learning</i> resource » <i>Ways of Being, Ways of Talk</i> (DVD) » <i>Two-Way English</i> (Chapter 3) » <i>Solid English</i> » <i>Deadly Ways to Learn</i>. <p>The <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Sample Workshop Guide</i> provides three sample workshops that can be accessed electronically through the DVD that is attached to the back of the resource.</p>	<p>Call and/or visit the Statewide Services Resource and Information Centre for a hard copy of the <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning</i> resource version.</p> <p>Enrol in professional learning: Professional Learning Information System (PLIS) calendar.</p> <p>Staff with relevant expertise and knowledge on Aboriginal English at the Statewide Services Centre can support leaders.</p> <p>Join a Connect Community Engage with the EAL/D Teacher Development Schools (TDSs).</p>

4. Plan the Aboriginal English Storybook project

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
<p>Decide on a two-way model for the storybook project and the resources required such as the Book Creator app on tablet technology.</p>	<p>Refer to the five case studies of the original schools involved in the Aboriginal English storybook project for ideas from others who have developed storybooks successfully.</p>	<p>Read case-studies on pp 14-29 of this document.</p>	<p>Tips on the nature of important two-way principles can be found in: <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning– Focus Area 10</i> Module 10.2: Eight Principles of Two-Way Learning pp 20-30.</p>
<p>Set up a schedule for each class involved in writing an Aboriginal English Storybook to access human and physical resources.</p>	<p>The number of available human and physical resources will impact on how many students can engage with the project at once.</p> <p>Aboriginal English storybook projects will be successfully implemented when led by Aboriginal people as this supports students to engage in their culture and own way of yarning.</p> <p>Utilising local settings outside the classroom should be given great priority as the environment plays a significant role in yarning.</p>	<p>Students require access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team members, » shared areas such as art rooms, local land marks, computer labs, library » resources such as tablet technology, computers, camera equipment, art supplies. 	<p>Make sure the schedules have flexibility to allow for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the needs of volunteer community members, » unexpected family business that may take staff away from their roles in the classroom.

5. Create Aboriginal English storybooks

The lessons that follow serve as a guide only. The level of difficulty, sequence and time allocated for each lesson is flexible and should be determined based on the current context and learning needs of students. Any lessons developed should form part of a balanced teaching and learning program.

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
<p>Lesson 1:</p> <p>Introduce Aboriginal English storybooks and explain why the class is going to make their own.</p>	<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » what Aboriginal English is and that it can sound different from region to region » some of the differences between SAE and Aboriginal English. <p>View the books and films.</p>	<p>View the Aboriginal English storybooks and films accessible through Connect resources: search for My WA .</p> <p>The films are also available through YouTube so families and community can view them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Wiluna » Kondinin » Medina 	<p>Call and/or visit the Statewide Services Resource and Information Centre to obtain the <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Focus Area 11</i> storybooks. The teacher notes can be accessed via Connect resources.</p>
<p>Lesson 2:</p> <p>Explore Aboriginal English storybooks.</p>	<p>Where possible, provide Aboriginal students with the opportunity to yarn in Aboriginal English. This should be led by the Aboriginal leader.</p> <p>Set up a display of Aboriginal English storybooks and allow students to explore the content of these.</p> <p>After students have been given some time to explore these books, ask students to choose a book and discuss with them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What book did you choose? » What do you like about this book? » Is your book written in SAE and Aboriginal English? 	<p>Provide students with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the 10 storybooks available as part of: <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning Focus Area 11</i>-Tell me your story (which also includes teacher notes) » The five books from the Aboriginal English Storybook project » Images to stimulate yarning. 	<p>Where possible, ensure this lesson is co-led by at least one Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educator.</p> <p>To support students to link into Aboriginal English more effectively, this activity could take place outside the normal SAE learning environment at a nearby local familiar site or just outside under a tree.</p>

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ How do you know? ☒ What are some of the ways in which the language in this book is different from that in other books? ☒ What did you like about the book you chose? 		
<p>Lesson 3: Planning the Aboriginal English storybook stories.</p>	<p>Planning for the stories could be done either by allowing Aboriginal students to yarn in Aboriginal English about different stories/ situations that they could use or by planning and participating in a shared experience such as an excursion with local elders.</p> <p>Note: if an excursion is included here, this lesson will require planning for the stories. Where possible, invite the local community to participate.</p> <p>When planning for the stories on-site, conversation starters may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ What stories from home can you share? ☒ What favourite places do you go to with family? ☒ What favourite things do you do with family? ☒ What interesting or funny events happened to you that you could talk about? ☒ What else could you talk about? 	<p>Invite local community members and/or elders to help with ideas about the content of the books.</p> <p>These could be Aboriginal traditional stories from the area or any contemporary events of the students and/or their families that would be good to record and share.</p>	<p>Taking students outside of the classroom, such as to a nearby local site</p> <p>or outside of the classroom under the trees, makes it easier for students to tune into Aboriginal English.</p> <p>If an excursion is included, a follow up activity is required where students reflect on what has been learnt and decide on what will be shared with others and how this will be captured in the storybooks.</p>

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
<p>Lesson 4: Draft your own story.</p>	<p>In Aboriginal English, students tell and record their stories individually or, for students who have a shared experience, in groups/pairs.</p> <p>Students should be supported by the co-leaders through conversation starters that help students to visualise how to represent the stories they have decided to share in Aboriginal English.</p> <p>The co-leaders scribe all ideas down for display in the classroom.</p> <p>Once students decide on the topic for their story or stories, encourage them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » tell the yarn to each other and record it using available technology, » decide how they will create the story or stories that will be shared. <p>Students can choose from resources provided. These may include multi-modal elements such as illustrations that are photographed and included next to the text.</p> <p>Texts may be digital or hardcopies.</p>	<p>Co-leaders may transcribe the oral stories for their students.</p> <p>Students may be provided with any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » tablet technology and/or smart phones that can capture images, record footage and include appropriate story writing apps » computers » art supplies » writing paper and pens. 	<p>It is essential that the editing process focuses on keeping Aboriginal English intact. Editing can easily be influenced by SAE.</p> <p>Refer to <i>Tracks to Two-Way Learning: Guidelines for Spelling and punctuation in Aboriginal English: 8.6.2.</i></p>
<p>Lesson 5: Edit</p>	<p>The editing process is led by an Aboriginal co-leader who uses the transcripts or the students' written work to read through their work and assist with the Aboriginal English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » sentence structure, » spelling, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Transcripts or student created drafts, » Video footage of students yarning. <p>Tracks to Two-Way Learning: Guidelines for Spelling and punctuation in Aboriginal English: 8.6.2.</p>	<p>It is essential that the editing process focuses on keeping Aboriginal English intact. Editing can easily be influenced by SAE.</p> <p>Use the drafts created to talk about the positive impacts of the project to families and the community. This will build on student enthusiasm and</p>

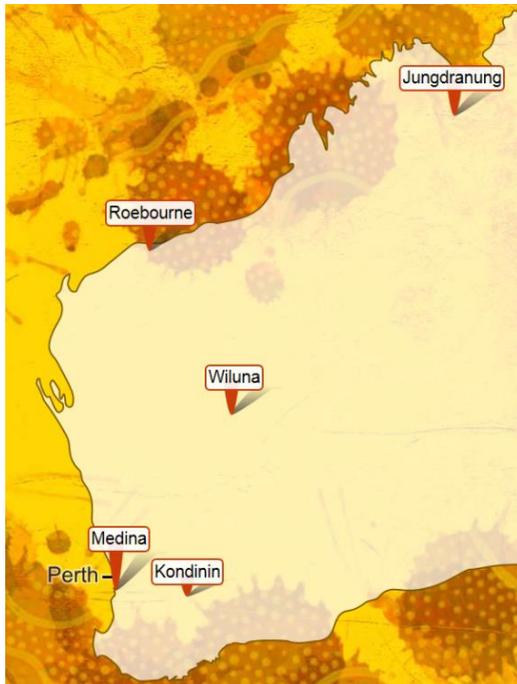
What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » flow of events, » readability of their story. 		engagement.
<p>Lesson 6: Illustrate</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for students to enhance their stories through a variety of media. This could include paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, dioramas or a combination of any of these.</p> <p>Students who began the story telling process with media designs may revise and/or enhance these once the final story has been written.</p>	<p>Students may be provided with any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » tablet technology and/or smart phones that can capture images, record footage and include appropriate story writing apps » computers » art supplies » overhead projector. 	<p>Aboriginal artists from the community should be invited to share their expertise and co-create with the students.</p>
<p>Lesson 7: Plan the celebration</p>	<p>Use the Aboriginal English storybooks to celebrate with families and community members across the whole school.</p> <p>Students decide on the details for a sharing day to share their storybooks. They co-collaborate to create a flyer advertising the event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Tablet technology » Computers » Art supplies 	<p>Use the finished products (books created at own school and other schools) to work with on dialect recognition and code switching skills.</p>
<p>Future lessons</p>	<p>Continue to use the students' Aboriginal English storybooks to discuss content for meaning and to develop language and literacy skills by exploring the structures of Aboriginal English in comparison with SAE.</p>		

6. Showcase the achievements with the school and local community

What is required	Considerations	Professional learning resources	Tips and solutions
<p>Invite families and community members to celebrate the diversity and uniqueness of the school and its students.</p>	<p>Students may choose to present their learning journey and storybook creation through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » digital or hardcopy displays that may include the steps in the creation process » artist talks where the author reads and talks about the storybook » screening of any filming and/or the digital storybooks » digital presentations. <p>The showcase will provide opportunities for students to share their learning and their storybook.</p>	<p>A designated space or spaces should be set up for the event. Equipment may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » display walls » cabinets » overhead projectors with a plug adaptor for tablets or computers » interactive whiteboards » tablets or smart phones » catering. 	<p>The created books should be circulated in the community so families can read and enjoy them.</p> <p>E-books can continue to be used in classes on interactive whiteboards.</p> <p>Small format texts for individual students can be created so they are able to read them by themselves.</p>

Case studies of the five original participating schools

Five schools with Aboriginal students, aged between nine and 17 years and from a range of geographical locations were involved in the original project. Through the creation of Aboriginal storybooks, the project supported increased literacy development in students. Other outcomes included professional growth in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officers (AIEO) to work 'two-way' and teachers' professional growth in the capabilities as outlined in the *Capability Framework – Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners*. Schools also made progress along the standards of the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*.



Through this project, AIEOs were supported to help students produce stories through reading and writing in Aboriginal English. The AIEOs learned how to articulate differences between Aboriginal English and SAE to help both teachers and students. In some schools, Aboriginal parents, caregivers and community members were involved and encouraged to join in, support and celebrate Aboriginal English in its written form.

Through the creation of the Aboriginal English storybooks, all schools were able to celebrate the learners' linguistic and cultural diversity. This occurred throughout the activities revolving around the process of creating books and through the showcasing of the end product: a set of completed books in an e-learning environment and/or in hard-cover form.

The five schools involved in this project were:

- » Jungdranung
- » Wiluna
- » Roebourne
- » Kondinin
- » Medina

Jungdranung Remote Community School

Jungdranung Remote Community School is situated 140km south west of Kununurra in the east Kimberley region. Jungdranung is a small school with a relatively small cohort of students. Five students, aged between seven and 16, participated in the project over a six-day period.

In the Jungdranung context, there was some linguistic difference from other project schools. The older students used Aboriginal English with some Kriol features present.

The process

- » The project began with a preparatory session where students learnt about Aboriginal English (AE), particularly in that it is not the same as Standard Australian English, but a different way of speaking – a different dialect. During this stage they experienced seeing Aboriginal English in its written form by browsing the storybooks from the *Tracks to Two-Way Learning* resource.
- » Next, students took part in a discussion to come up with possible topics for stories from their region. (The Principal had previously discussed ideas for stories with students and had made some contact with community members about this.)
- » Each student was then recorded telling their story. Digital photos were taken of the artwork that they prepared relating to their story and video clips were made of the story telling.
- » Once transcribed, the visiting Aboriginal Education Coordinator assisted the students in

editing their stories ensuring that the Aboriginal English was accurately recorded. Older students also helped the younger ones to edit their stories.

- ✎ When the stories were completed, students began their art work for the book. They spent time discussing the text and deciding what pictures would be needed.
- ✎ On the final day, further digital photos were taken of the artwork and video clips were made of students telling their stories. Each student designed their own e-book using the photos and videos. The students then shared their e-books with each other, the principal, teacher and visiting parents.

The outcomes

Jungdranung students produced a range of stories: Wen we bin young; Goin Bush; The Wild Bull; Camping at Keep River; Goin to Second Gorge; and The Big Wet (not published).

They were motivated and persevered over the six rather intense days of story writing. Some students also made videos during the weekend to support their storybooks. Students' awareness and understanding of Aboriginal English and how it differs from SAE increased and older students were becoming more aware of their code-switching between the two dialects. The students were also keen to talk about the project at home with the result that some family members came on the last day to see the books.

The feedback

At Jungdranung the Aboriginal Education Coordinator for the East Kimberley Region made the following observations about the project:

I think it's important that our little ones are encouraged to be able to speak ... in their own first language, express themselves so they feel confident in their first language of how things are done in school ... because it is the stepping stone ... the first step in them understanding this new language that they need to learn to move through their educational journey right through to Year 12 ... Once [the first language] is valued they feel valued because it is part of who they are and the community they come from ... it's not less than, it's equal to.

She saw a noticeable change in the students when they used their own language:

You could see when they were reading their stories. They were actually enjoying it more because they were able to put in their little twist, and express themselves in the way they would tell it in a conversation at home ... It made them enjoy it more. Their little eyes were lighting up ... and I felt encouraged by that to have that freedom just to talk and feel relaxed to speak in their home talk.

and explained how learning in a second language was difficult:

... even as an adult, I like hearing and listening and reading stories in my own (language) ... because it's quicker to understand/comprehend. Whereas when you have English as a second language that process ... takes time ... you can

explain difficult things/concepts in your first language better ... Students come with a different language they also come with a different set of social ... protocols and worldviews.

The Coordinator also compared the students' school experience with traditional ways of learning:

Traditionally if I had an elder there I would always listen to the elder and go with what they demonstrated... whereas mainstream would always go with what is written in the dictionaries or what's in the library and use that as a starting point... Whereas for us we learn sitting around having conversations ... learning through song, dance ... and through our living culture and language ... I feel [this is] not really valued as much from mainstream, because it is just a different way of living, learning and being ... we do things differently, but different isn't bad you know. I think that's something that really needs to be spoken about more and acknowledged for our little ones.

In addition, she noted how students begin to code-switch at school:

You can actually hear and see that they are trying to code-switch. I see something is happening for them, which is encouraging, because you only get better with that in time. It's not something that happens easy or quickly.

Wiluna Remote Community School

Wiluna Remote Community School is another successful example of remote implementation of the storybooks project. Located in the Goldfields Region and situated 1000km north east of Perth, the year 5/6 class participated in the project.

Wiluna is a Martu community where Mantjitjarra is the main Aboriginal language amongst other Western Desert languages. Aboriginal English or Martu English, as it is known locally, is widely spoken and students are learning SAE as an additional language or dialect.

The process

- » To begin, students were introduced to the project and the Aboriginal English storybooks from the *Tracks to Two-Way Learning* resource (Focus Area 11). Some of the boys enjoyed the Grandfather story.
- » The AIEO spoke Martu and Aboriginal English. An existing wall chart that also included Martu words was referred to during discussion of Aboriginal English and traditional language.
- » Students were then invited to call out ideas for stories from their country (region). These were recorded on a large chart. Although quiet at first, students soon warmed to the activity, particularly the boys. This session quickly became a very informative one as students were allowed to call out freely and were not made to 'take turns'.
- » Next individuals or pairs told their own stories which were recorded on the tablet while the rest of the class worked with the teacher to collaboratively write a recount of a recent bush trip.

- » This was followed by a session to create relevant art work for the stories. The students were highly motivated during this.
- » One story - 'Rockhole to Rockhole' - was one of many, but was chosen for further development because the students who helped produce it were the most regular school attendees and showed the most commitment to the project.
- » 'Rockhole to Rockhole' was then jointly constructed by three students with help from the AIEO who made sure that the Aboriginal English was maintained. The story was typed up and some students were able to read it.
- » Once completed, edits were made to conform to the Guidelines for Spelling and punctuation in Aboriginal English outlined in the *Tracks to Two-Way Learning* resource: 8.6.2.
- » One of the boys invited his father to come to the school and read his story. The father helped to edit the story, ensuring that Martu words were accurate and that the text did not contain culturally sensitive knowledge.
- » Further edits were made by project members, the AIEO and students to ensure consistency of spelling and design.
- » The story was then converted into an e-book ready for publication and artwork was produced and included and then re-checked by the AIEO.

The outcomes

At Wiluna, the following stories were told by the students: three separate *Bush Tucker* yarns; *Rockhole to Rockhole*; and *Seven Sisters*. *Rockhole to Rockhole* was selected for publication as an e-book.



Students were both motivated and eager doing the artwork for their story at school. The artwork was completed with the assistance of a parent after school with the students sometimes engaged in their work until 6pm.

Students were also considerably proud and excited when they were given the opportunity to read their stories to former footballers, David Wirrpanda and Troy Cook, from the Wirrpanda Foundation who visited the school at this time.

A follow-up session provided an opportunity to visit Pawurnu Rockhole with the Education Department's media team. The three students involved were filmed telling the *Rockhole to Rockhole* story to an elder. The elder then shared the *Dingo Dreaming* story with the students.

The feedback

The principal at Wiluna praised the storybooks project as an opportunity:

for the students so they can get that sense of ownership, motivation, but we're also doing an authentic learning task. It's important for the staff and teachers because they get to see the importance and ultimately academic benefit of involving first language in the project. So for them professionally they understand more about how best to teach students or speakers with an additional language or dialect.

He also noted that the impact of the project can extend to the community: "It helps the community build pride ... they can also see the importance of home language in the learning environment", and the importance for renewed educational success:

There's a long history ... of limiting opportunities based on language and we have an understanding now of ... how we work in the school ... that building on first language is the only first step if you want to have a successful outcome. If the school is to engender trust, then

it has to be inclusive. This inclusivity in the classroom is also a powerful means to develop literacy and curricular knowledge. Many families speak of how their languages were banned in the school when they were young, how they were not important. Well, they are important, and it's our job as educators and agents of best practice to raise awareness in the community that language in school is now not only accepted, but encouraged because there are important cognitive, social and cultural gains from that.

The Wiluna principal saw the project as creating a better education with the outcome for students being more balanced where they "can be who they are at home and completely safe with that, come to school... and understand that "I am valued for who I am". He noted that "when the children are working in their first language, and you value that, they come alive and that's when further learning happens and where learning and mastering SAE begins.'

During the project, students were observed to be more focussed in the classroom:

One of the students is a fantastic student, always so much energy, which is sometimes difficult to contain in a classroom, but doing this book project we've seen (him) put his energy into storytelling, which is something that he is phenomenally skilful at, and we've seen that now he can be more engaged with the work that he does, which is connected to him. ... He sees that his stories and ideas are valued and have importance, so that led him to think a little seriously, maybe take some time, a little more

time than usual, about what he is doing. So I think it has been a very important and positive change for him.

Some considerations

As Aboriginal English is an oral language and the home language of the students, students were often much more adept at telling their stories than reading and writing them. They would have particular difficulty in writing a longer text. However, in spite of editing by the teacher or AIEO, they remained proud of their story in its written form.

The recording of stories at Wiluna was more difficult due to classroom distractions and the students' soft voices. Therefore a quieter staffroom was used for the students to tell their yarns. For some students, the use of tablets for filming was new to them and as a result they were initially very shy and conscious of being filmed.

A further consideration raised by the principal at Wiluna is the need for sustainability and continuity of the book-making process. It can serve "as a marker to future principals and teachers about what's possible and what works".

Roebourne District High School

Roebourne District High School is situated in the Pilbara region approximately 1400 km north of Perth. The school caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 12. Students at Roebourne speak a range of Aboriginal languages as well as Aboriginal English. One of the traditional languages, Yindjibarndi, is taught at the school.



Some 16 students in year 5/6 took part in the project as well as several year 3/4 students. Staff at Roebourne were very enthusiastic about the project and offered help. Some staff were also keen to learn about story writing apps.

The process

- » The students completed the two books over two separate five day sessions.
- » First, students were introduced to the notion that they had traditional languages and Aboriginal English as their home languages and learnt about the project's focus on writing in Aboriginal English. They were then given the opportunity to look at the Aboriginal English storybooks from the *Tracks to Two-Way Learning* resource.
- » Next the students brainstormed for ideas for the storybooks which were recorded on charts.
- » Students grouped themselves into pairs and began expanding the shared ideas or writing their own stories.
- » Students were invited to tell their yarns for audio-recording. Students however were particularly shy and reticent. More success was achieved by everyone sitting on the floor which reduced formality. Audio-recorded stories were transcribed.
- » The class was led by the AIEO to put together a jointly constructed text called *Campin out Millstream*.
- » During the next session, the story was edited by the two AIEOs (who are also language teachers) to ensure that Aboriginal English was maintained and to check that the traditional words were spelt correctly.
- » Students worked with an art specialist to begin illustrations for the story. They drew the characters and contexts – damper, fire, trees, mum, auntie, etc. Some background scenes were also painted.
- » The next day students worked in pairs to create a “scene” from the story in a diorama with cut

out characters, rocks and trees. The students then photographed the completed diorama and added it to the e-book text using story writing apps. They then worked with the AIEO (Aboriginal language teacher) to create relevant speech bubbles for their picture.

- ☒ The students' individual stories were also edited and then illustrated. One was made into a rap song – *Goin Bush Song* – which was practised with the music teacher. Students used boomerangs and tapping sticks to keep the beat. A short video was made of the performance which is included with the e-book.

The outcomes

The students' chosen topics included 'Huntin', 'Campin', 'Fishin', 'Cookin Damper' and 'Campin out. Millstream'.

Staff at Roebourne were enthusiastic about the project and supportive of incorporating Aboriginal English into their language and literacy instruction. They also showed interest in learning about story writing apps. The class teacher was also very supportive and flexible with class time.



After working with the AIEO in editing their yarns, students expressed surprise that their story was so long in that they had spoken for such a length of time. Having seen their story transcribed, they were able to see they had told a yarn and this served to build their confidence and increase the pride and pleasure they demonstrated in having participated.

However, while writing the stories was engaging for the students at Roebourne, they became even more engaged when creating the diorama and had no difficulty with the literacy task of adding the speech bubbles. They particularly enjoyed the activity of connecting the written and visual interpretations of story events.

The feedback

Students reported that they had really enjoyed the project and particularly the activity at the end with the picture of the diorama and the speech bubbles. Others enjoyed especially being able to tell their yarns and then read them.

Feedback from one of the AIEOs (Aboriginal language teacher) was very positive as can be seen in the following quotes:

I enjoyed doing this e-project with the students from Roebourne DHS because the AE [Aboriginal English]... it's a part of the Aboriginal people.

I reckon this project will help the children and I reckon yes... because it [is] making the teachers ... more aware that there is Aboriginal English, and it is a language. It has things like in normal SAE- you have... rules and things to go with the language. So Aboriginal English ... it's a bit like that too...

I reckon that [knowing about Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English] would help the kids progress because...yeah...if the teacher's explaining it to the kids... I remember when my... my cousin when he first came... when he first came into kindy and he was using... Aboriginal English... and when he was asking the teacher for... "I want to go toilet Miss... got to go toilet Miss! Miss!! wanna go toilet miss ... 'guna!" And the teacher was saying, "What are you saying? I can't understand"... so in those days they didn't have an AIEO, so we had to try an make the teacher understand"

Some considerations

A major difficulty confronting the filming of the students' story-telling was finding a suitably quiet location in a large school environment. Even filming outside the classroom was problematic due to loud cockatoos and machinery.

The school environment itself was seen to inhibit students' initial willingness to use Aboriginal English, as if being in a SAE context required only SAE. At times also Aboriginal staff themselves expected students to conform to SAE narrative structures. Nonetheless students were very enthusiastic about creating the stories, artwork and dioramas.

This project, for Roebourne, was conducted in approximately 10 days over a couple of months. More progress can be achieved if story writing in the home dialect can be incorporated into the weekly class schedule. An additional advantage with this is then the on-going recognition of the home dialect and allowing for students to build their code-switching skills, which in turn facilitates their transitioning to Standard Australian English.

Kondinin Primary School

Kondinin Primary School is located 275km south-east of Perth and is situated in the Wheatbelt Education Region. Staff include a principal and four staff members teaching across three class levels: junior, middle and upper. The project at Kondinin was led by an Aboriginal community member, grandmother of most of the Aboriginal children, who also has extensive research experience in Aboriginal English.

The process

- » The initial process of the project introduction involved mainly the older students and began with the principal explaining the project and introducing the project members.
- » Aboriginal English was explained and this included discussions about its similarities with SAE and its differences in meaning.
- » Students were shown the *Tracks to Two-Way learning* resource storybooks; they chose the story *Djiti Djiti* and each student read a page and talked about their own similar experiences.
- » Students also watched the video *Talking Deadly* from the *Deadly Ways to Learn* resource. Aboriginal English vocabulary items from the video were discussed.
- » In order for students to have a shared experience to write about, an excursion to McCann's Rock was organised.
- » During the excursion and bus trip to and from McCann's Rock, notes were made of the students' words and conversations about the event. These were later transcribed onto posters.
- » Little structure was imposed on the excursion allowing students to explore their environment

and their use of Aboriginal English informally. Students were able to yarn with the community member while she made damper and noted words and sentences on the tablets. They also took photos and made videos of the excursion on the tablet and some of the students made sand drawings.

- » Later the principal took the non-Aboriginal students to climb the rock while the Aboriginal community member had the others sit around her and talk about going out to the bush, generating talk about hunting, djilgies (marron) and kangaroos.
- » The following day, the older students wrote out the word lists and sentences that the Aboriginal students had generated during the excursion. These were then displayed in the class and students were asked to read them and expand on them drawing on their own recollections of the excursion.
- » The Aboriginal community member then organised the students' contributions into the story *Wicked Kids*. Each Aboriginal student's contribution was used enabling them to see their own sentences when they read the story. Older students also read the story to the younger students. Further edits of the story were made with student input and a prototype of the book was constructed.

- » A local Aboriginal artist worked with the students to prepare illustrations for the e-book.
- » A second excursion to McCann's Rock was also arranged with the Education Department's media team.
- » Equilibrium between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal storybook creations was achieved by a poet coming to the school to help non-Aboriginal students create stories, poems and a song in Standard Australian English.



- » Staff were involved in the story writing project, initially, as the Aboriginal community member spent time with staff going through the drafts and explaining the story. Drafts of the Aboriginal English story were also posted on the staff room wall for teachers to read and make comments. Information and updates on the project were added to the school newsletter.

- ⊗ Following this, staff participated in a one day professional development induction on the *Aboriginal Capability Framework – Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners*. This professional learning was co-delivered with the Aboriginal community member. Of particular benefit at this time was the fact that staff were able to use the draft of the Aboriginal English book to make close observations about the specific language features of the Aboriginal English of their students. Through this professional learning, staff had opportunities to explore and discuss the principles of two-way bidialectal education and gain a better understanding of how this project was supporting the literacy development of their students. Following this professional learning, staff were better able to assist both the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal students to read their respective stories. Aboriginal students read the Aboriginal English *Wiki Kids* story and the non-Aboriginal students read the stories, poems and songs they had written in Standard Australian English. Part of the session included informal reflections about the use and features of both dialects.

The outcomes

The principal at Kondinin was very supportive and flexible with the scheduling of the project and with withdrawing students from classes to contribute. The principal anticipates using the productions completed as part of the school's 75th Anniversary in 2016.

A major outcome of the project was its capacity to enhance relationships with community members and have family members visiting the school for the first time. Staff at Kondinin Primary School also acknowledged that the project enhanced their own

understanding of their Aboriginal students' home language.

Because an Aboriginal community member was also part of the team, the project enabled strong collaboration with community. The Aboriginal community member used much of her own time to make visits to the school, to have informal discussions with individual teachers, to talk with the children and to publicise the project among the Aboriginal community.

The feedback

Teachers noted that it was “the first time they've [the students] been able to use their home language” and recognised the enthusiasm that this generated - how it made them “feel special”.

For the principal at Kondinin, the project:

came along at the right time... [as] we are engaging with the new Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework... and ultimately to make sure we were doing the best job for our Aboriginal students ... It was very fortunate – very good timing for us.

More than half the students at Kondinin Primary School identify as Aboriginal. Further benefits of the project were seen as fostering improved relationships and partnerships with the local Aboriginal community by “honouring, respecting of Aboriginal culture by acknowledging that Aboriginal English is the language students are speaking at home, families are speaking at home” and “getting our students and staff to be aware of Aboriginal English”. This learning journey was described by the principal:

The kids weren't aware of the terminology that it was called Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English. Students become proficient at code-switching from what they were speaking at home to school, but they weren't really aware of it, so this is about making it explicit – and therefore the why of learning Standard Australian English at school ... being specific about it and the same thing for staff, parents and community as well. It is really getting to understand what Aboriginal English is. It's not just the surface level differences, like a translation ... it's the deeper differences ... the underlying cultural differences that define the two dialects of English. This is a strength based approach for us as a school, rather than looking to correct Aboriginal English, we can embrace students' home language as an important part of their cultural identity.

Nonetheless, in the Kondinin context, difficulties in taking on this new understanding of language or dialect difference were noted:

The thing that we're finding difficult is, especially for non-Aboriginal people, to get our heads around the surface level differences. In Kondinin the surface differences between Aboriginal English and SAE are hard to detect. There are some surface level differences, but they don't seem that extreme ... so that's where it's about delving into what's underneath all the language and the culture that comes with it. As Glenys Collard would say: the pragmatics. That's really important.

Some considerations

Importantly, the project stimulated interest among the Aboriginal community with community members visiting the school for the first time. Hence it can serve as a valuable stepping stone in generating positive relationships between schools and Aboriginal communities.

For many students this would be their first time writing in Aboriginal English. Hence they will not be familiar with the written form. It can be a challenge for AIEOs as well as students and they may default to SAE in writing and constructing their texts. For example, where repetition is considered redundant in SAE texts, it is acceptable in Aboriginal English narratives. Although in spoken Aboriginal English sometimes the repetition is almost inaudible.

Another consideration that took some time and effort was to apply some meaningful principles to the spelling of Aboriginal English. As Aboriginal English is not 'standardised', the spelling of words can sometimes be difficult, especially when a word varies in meaning when pronunciation is changed. Much discussion took place about this. In general, the principles outlined in the *Tracks to Two-Way Learning (Focus Area 8)* were applied to determine the spelling. However, on some occasions, the guidelines were harder to apply.

Medina Primary School

Medina Primary School is located in the town of Kwinana within the South Metropolitan Region. The student cohort at Medina includes 47% Aboriginal students and some students from migrant families. Teachers at the school are currently engaged on a related action research project (the *Capability Framework – Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners* Action Research project) to expand their understand of EAL/D learners and their needs.



Under the direction of the Aboriginal language teacher, the AIEO, and with the support of the class teacher, 20 Year 5/6 students were involved in the project. The project implementation was allocated 1 hour per week in the initial stages with one additional full day and more time provided for project completion. The Aboriginal language teacher and the class teacher had been involved in previous Two-Way projects.

The process

- » Several meetings were scheduled for planning the project implementation where the importance of Aboriginal English was emphasised. Initial discussions also explored which class contained the strongest Aboriginal English speakers and was therefore the best for writing the storybooks.
- » At Medina the project began with the class talking about Aboriginal English. One student told a story which was written up on a whiteboard and the features of Aboriginal English and SAE discussed. As some students did not have the confidence to actually write a story they were given the task of copying down the story in the two ways of writing (Aboriginal English and SAE). Others were inspired to write their own stories in Aboriginal English.
- » Students discussed/brainstormed possible topics for stories generating ideas such as going bush, football, hunting, swimming at the waterhole, staying at the beach, trips to Karratha to see a mother and new baby, and trips to Kalgoorlie to get didgeridoo wood for tapping sticks.
- » After several discussions and writing sessions, two topics emerged for production as e-books: football prepared by the boys and camping prepared by the girls.
- » Each of the two groups of 10 then collaboratively constructed their story with the help of the AIEOs. Mock-up books were made and designs for the artwork began.
- » Students were assisted with editing by the AIEOs.
- » Final drawings and paintings were later created by the students. The tablets were used to take photos which were then added to the writing app.

The outcomes

Students at Medina were highly motivated and engaged with the process of writing stories in Aboriginal English as evident by their reluctance to leave their task during recess. Significant pride was also expressed on the part of the staff involved, with one AIEO preparing forewords for each of the e-books.

Staff awareness of Aboriginal English and the students' strong code-switching skills were also raised.



Although the e-book task involved joint construction of the text, several students were subsequently inspired to write their own stories, for example, about a trip to the Kalgoorlie Cup. Interestingly, in this story, as the protagonists moved closer to Kalgoorlie in their journey, the Aboriginal variation moved from an inclusion of Nyungar¹ words to increased inclusion of Wangkatja words. In fact one student was so proud of his story that he kept it continually in his school bag!

The feedback

At Medina students were given the opportunity to provide feedback about their story writing and showed a remarkably deep understanding of the experience of being bidialectal in a mono-dialectal classroom:

“What I’ve enjoyed doing is being able to learn what to say in our way and doing it in our way because every single time we are learning their way it’s hard.... Well we’re learning our culture as well and trying to get it back and see how it’s working”.

“It’s better without someone [beside you] saying “It’s wrong”, cause everyone else in the class they get shame because usually the teachers are correcting us girls and saying it’s wrong – and it’s hard.... but when we’re with Jade, she says we can write it our way and how we think it’s spelt and it doesn’t have to be right or wrong.... the best thing I like at school is goin’...doing stuff that includes my way, ‘cause it’s easier.”

This student in particular described her code-switching behaviour: “It’s like a little switch at home. I say it differently, but in school I have to say it right ... home switch”. Another student appeared to be facing a dilemma with regard to code-switching: “[It’s] hard at first, code-switching. You always get told from the teacher you can’t do it that way”.

For some, the experience of actually writing in one’s dialect took some time to learn: “When we first got it we had to write it in all Aboriginal language, but I didn’t actually get it much ... I don’t actually write in Aboriginal ... but I’m still learning to write in Aboriginal”. Others embraced it wholeheartedly: “It was really fun, also getting out of class. Being able to do something you actually want to do and writing”.

Aboriginal staff feedback at Medina was extremely positive particularly with regard to recognition of Aboriginal English as an alternative dialect: “So it’s getting the awareness out there – that it’s a valuable dialect and that it’s worthwhile and the kids are code switching and there is a difference – it’s great!” There were advantages also for these staff: “It’s opened up this whole new world of language to me and it’s made me feel proud of my language and not to be ashamed of it and to know that my language is a language. It’s not just something that was made up”.

¹ There are various spellings accepted for this Aboriginal Language. The spelling ‘Nyungar’ is widely used in linguistic research. The alternative spelling: ‘Noongar’ is used by the Education Department’s LOTE Program and therefore by the children learning it.

These staff members were also aware of some students' advanced code-switching skills:

"...those kids are code-switching so well that they don't reveal that they have this hidden talent. So you will never hear them at school doing that ... They very clever at being completely mainstream when they are at school and some of the teachers said to us ... "Oh I didn't know that such and such could speak Aboriginal English".

And we're like "Yeah, they're speaking that out there in the town and down the shop and at the BBQ or whatever".

The notion of code-switching was strongly adopted by staff and students as a result of the project:

They started actively code switching and recognising what code switching is. They've grabbed onto the fact that they've got this other dialect and that it's real and that it's valued. Some of their teachers have been really, really instrumental in supporting and taking on board, allowing the students to write in AE in the classroom as a flow on effect when they've got normal literacy in mainstream. They're able to write it in AE [Aboriginal English] and teachers are utilising Viv and I to help translate that back ... So teachers are getting a lot more work out of kids. Where kids would sit and do nothing much, now they're taking off Love it! You've got kids that don't want to go to recess because they're too busy with their story. We've had lots of positive improvement We've seen better behaviour, better attendance, and it's really just been a great launch pad for these kids, and to start to embrace books. They didn't want to

know about books before, but now they're writing one, cause they think books are great. So yeah, it's just fantastic!"

Further positive outcomes from the project at Medina included empowerment and better achievement:

Yes it's really empowering for these kids to be part of something that's not someone else's culture, not someone else's dialect or language. That's the secret. That's the key.

These kids come to school every day ... teachers often don't realize that's not how they speak at home ... the teachers don't always realize ... they really only change to come to school and to participate. And that's hard ... So I think it's just been really great for these kids' self-esteem and for the community too ... it's really just been a really positive experience throughout ... we've learnt a lot.

One boy lifted his grade in literacy from a D to a B level through doing this ... he wasn't producing any work at all before. Now he's just gone to town with it ... he's up there with the best, writing and writing. He's one of the boys who doesn't want to go out to recess if he's in the middle of something ... that speaks for itself.

The use of tablets and story writing apps to create books that would be accessible on a website was a strong motivator and generated considerable excitement:

Students were going home and telling everyone what they're doing. They can't wait. They've been saying they're getting published ... because we said we're going to print some here

and keep some copies in school. They want it to go bigger than that. They want to be stars. ... "We are authors now" ... so they have really taken to it. They feel an extreme amount of self-worth, confidence and pride because of it.

At Medina, Aboriginal staff also observed that the exclusivity of existing resources could now be addressed:

So if we have this kind of material that kids are producing now, there's a story they can relate to ... use that. It's a good resource. That's what I'm hoping comes out of this project – that we can start having resources that are more inclusive and then you'll get better results ... It's even when you read a story to a kid, half the stories that get read to kids, our Aboriginal children don't have much in common with that ... that's not what we're doing ... they try to relate to it, but in a totally different way and teachers don't necessarily recognise that, because they don't realise what's going on ... they just think the kid's not really ... interested or playing up... it's that they can't relate.

Teachers were also seen to benefit from the project: "It teaches teachers as well. They can learn something as well here ... it helps bring communities together. It helps break down barriers, creates a better understanding of one another's differences".

The Medina principal noted that from a teaching point of view the project brought about an opportunity for Aboriginal students to experience success as "... some students don't experience success at school". It was also an opportunity to:

...look at what we're actually doing with our Aboriginal students and how many opportunities are we really giving them and I think in a way it was an eye opener for us because [of] the code switching - it's been a learning curve as we believe we are doing the right thing but we are not providing students with the opportunities often enough.

Reflection on previous teaching strategies was also evident at Medina:

Assessment using SAE demonstrated that some students were struggling with the curriculum. It certainly gives a different perspective when we allow the students to use their first language as this is what they bring to the school ... in actual fact they are not struggling. What they are struggling to do is to speak and write English as a second language ... their strengths lie in presenting information in their first language.

Some considerations

The implementation of the project in this larger metropolitan school brought to light the need for students to be made aware and to become familiar with writing in Aboriginal English which they had only experienced in its spoken form previously. The opportunity was welcomed by the students and enabled them to talk about their own linguistic experiences and explore their code-switching. Having the ability to recognise the difference between the two dialects, and the knowledge that the home language is both valid and valued, provides the basis for feeling strong to develop bidialectal expertise and to develop additional strength in SAE.

At Medina the project was conducted under challenging time constraints due to timetabling grids and additional administrative requirements and school activities/commitments. Nonetheless the dedication of the Aboriginal staff members to the project ensured that students had the opportunity to experience writing in their own dialect, even if it meant spending time outside of that allocated to them.

If this model is to be mirrored in another, similar context, such constraints might be overcome with a storybook project being scheduled into the timetable across the duration of an entire term. This would better allow for continual recognition and valuing of the home language and for supporting additional and ongoing progress in the learning of SAE using a bidialectal model.

As can be seen in the feedback from Medina, the project raised the staff understanding of the linguistic skills that Aboriginal students bring to their learning environment, including their highly developed abilities to code-switch as required.