

The impact of White schooling on Aboriginal student success: Insights from community

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In this presentation, the voices of parents, community members, and Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) are foregrounded to help contextualise the experiences of Aboriginal students in five selected NSW schools. Collectively, the insights pinpoint the avenues and barriers for Aboriginal student success in Australian education, as well as areas where further advancements are needed urgently. Interviews with community revealed that while school-based culture programs are spaces of empowerment and safety where students ‘blossom’, the lack of consistency in valuing and investing in these programs, combined with naive and ignorant pedagogy creates the conditions of shame that hamstrings Aboriginal students educational belonging, participation, and success. In order to improve current schooling experiences for Aboriginal students, the community stressed strongly that there is an urgent need to embed relational-and-identity practices within educational transitional practices between Primary and Secondary schools.

The permeating theme of interviews illuminated a desperate plea for schools to be willing and committed to engaging in two-way learning with communities in order to develop genuine connections and knowledge of Country, peoples, history, and by extension, the students who attend their schools.