
***Supporting Success
for
Indigenous Students***



Indigenous peoples are diverse, within and across nations. At the same time, **Indigenous children** have not generally had access to the same **quality of education** that other children in their country enjoy. This situation arises, in part, because **school leaders and teachers** have not always been effectively prepared to teach Indigenous students, nor are they necessarily provided with **resources** to help them develop their **capabilities and confidence**.

Some teachers and schools are successfully supporting Indigenous students. Indigenous students report feeling supported when the people at their schools:

- **Care** about them and who they are as Indigenous people;
- **Expect** them to succeed in education; and,
- Help them to **learn** about their cultures, histories and languages.

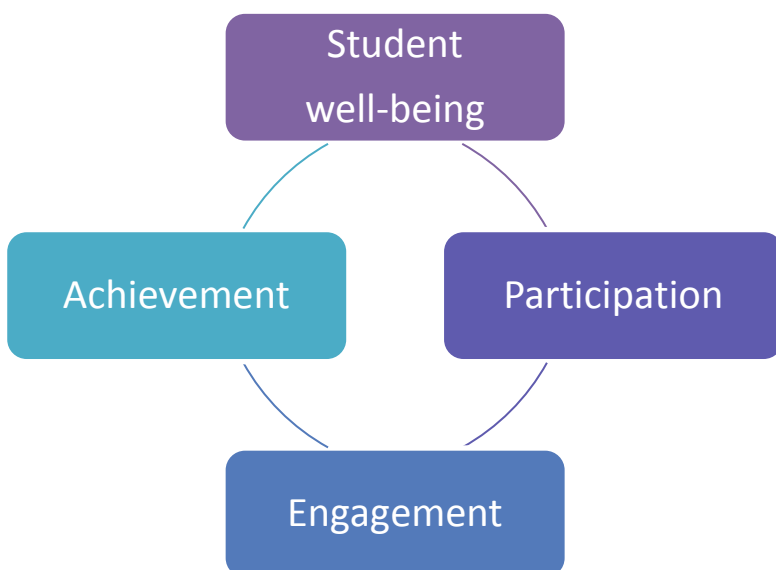
OECD research indicates several ways that teachers can make a big difference in supporting success for Indigenous students:

- **Extra support for students:** Finding ways to change the experiences of individual students goes a long way.
- **Engaging families:** Mutually respectful relationships between schools and parents can have significant benefits for students.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** Tracking progress with data helps educators and families understand where progress is being made.

Principals and other school leaders can make all the difference in **supporting teachers** and promoting success for Indigenous students. In addition, school systems can strengthen the efforts of teachers and principals by focusing on **early learning**: High quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) for Indigenous children sets them on an early pathway for success.

The issues affecting Indigenous students are **complex**, deep and longstanding. What happens in one aspect of students' lives influences the other aspects. For these reasons, **success for Indigenous students must be defined in a holistic way**—taking each student into account as a whole person, with their families and communities. Supporting Indigenous student success means promoting **well-being, participation, engagement and achievement**. Each of these four components of success builds on and enhances the others.

Taking this broad view of student success, this brochure describes promising practices to support Indigenous students using examples from across Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Although the focus is on Indigenous students, it is clear that the educational practices described here also benefit non-Indigenous students.



Extra Support for Students



There are many ways to provide extra support to individual students. A model that works well for schools with a number of Indigenous students is to employ Indigenous Support Workers; such staff can address barriers faced by Indigenous students and identify opportunities to enhance their engagement and success in education. More specifically, such staff can contribute to ensuring regular attendance of Indigenous students at school, supporting teachers in building sound relationships with Indigenous students and their parents, initiating new curriculum resources, and leading professional development for teachers and whole-of-school activities to grow the cultural competence of staff and students together. Other models include providing tailored tuition to Indigenous students, on top of regular classroom activities. This can focus on areas of need, such as language development, or on areas of particular interest to Indigenous students, including cultural and sporting activities.

In a high school in Alberta, a dedicated Indigenous students' room is used as part of a graduate coaching programme. Two coaches are available in the room to assist students. One is an academic coach and the other is an Indigenous co-ordinator, who assists students with issues that may be getting in the way of their study programme. Staff at the high school have expectations that students will graduate, and they hold students accountable for working hard to achieve this.

Engaging Families

Better and faster improvements at school can be achieved with families' support.

Where respect, trust and positive relationships have not always been part of historic or recent experiences between Indigenous communities and schools, Indigenous families are likely to be wary of engaging with school staff. However, where bridges are built and mutually respectful relationships are formed, the benefits for students can be significant. Schools that achieve sustained improvements for Indigenous students recognise the key role of Indigenous parents, leaders and other community members and actively build relationships with these important people in their students' lives.

There are a number of successful models where schools have effectively engaged Indigenous families in their children's education. The most effective are those that link teachers with parents on education goals for their children and where parents are supported to play a very active role in their children's engagement and learning at school.

An elementary school in New Brunswick has almost eliminated academic and behavioural gaps between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students, achieving high results overall. The school is based in a low socio-economic area and has a significant Indigenous student population from the nearby First Nation community. The principal, staff,



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parents and students described numerous strategies for achieving their success, including carefully managing each child's transition to school. Staff meet parents in the First Nation community before children start school to learn about their child's interests, development and needs. Children and their parents visit the school before the year starts, and a welcome ceremony for children and their families takes place once the year has commenced.

Monitoring and Reporting



Monitoring progress and having the data to do this helps educators and stakeholders to see whether the package of initiatives in place has sufficient breadth and reach to shift overall student outcomes. Without evidence to monitor progress, it is easy to become convinced that progress is being achieved, especially if the new initiatives have wide support. Such information can also build demand amongst parents and students, in terms of their expectations, voice and influence.

An example in Australia that supports teachers to adopt such an approach is the Starting Block Programme, funded by the Cathy Freeman Foundation (Cathy Freeman is an Indigenous Australian Olympic gold medallist, who famously ran her victory lap at the Sydney Olympics draped in the Aboriginal flag). The Starting Block equips teachers with resources to measure and record student progress and achievement in literacy, attendance and general conduct on a daily basis. At the end of each term, students' families and community members attend Starting Block Awards ceremonies to recognise their achievements. The programme is designed to help children learn to set and realise personal goals.

School Leadership

In schools where Indigenous students are achieving well, there is generally a highly effective and committed principal who has done 'whatever it takes' to ensure Indigenous students are at school, engaged in learning and making sound progress. Approaches in such schools tend towards a 'whole-of-child' perspective that puts students' overall well-being as the key priority. Effective principals also set high expectations for teachers and take responsibility for monitoring Indigenous students' academic progress, to ensure expectations of progress are being met and that any needed interventions are put in place in a timely manner. Inspirational leaders encourage teacher, family and school engagement in all of the other promising practices.

A principal in New Brunswick described working alongside the local Indigenous community for 10 years, with teachers and with the local education ministry, to put in place effective supports for Indigenous students at his school. The results are overwhelmingly positive, from student well-being, participation and engagement, to students' academic results.

“It's our responsibility to find the resources we need... these are children, who want to learn.”

School Principal, New Brunswick

Support for Teachers

It may not be realistic for every teacher to meet Indigenous students' needs relating to language, culture and identity, but there is much that can be done to help teachers feel confident and competent in establishing positive relationships with their Indigenous students. Teachers are sometimes not aware of the

assumptions they are making about their students, especially if there are cultural or linguistic differences between themselves and those they teach. However, such assumptions can change when teachers become aware of their preconceptions, including the impact these have on their students.

Teaching can also be enhanced through deliberate selection of learning activities, curriculum content and assessment mechanisms. A very easy step for schools to take is to provide and use books and other resources developed by Indigenous people. For example, contemporary texts by Indigenous authors can be integrated as curriculum resources. These can be used in many ways to make learning more relevant and engaging for Indigenous students and to build their confidence and competence.

"SHOW ME YOUR MATH" PROGRAMME

Show Me Your Math is a programme developed by researchers at the Faculty of Education at Saint Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia in collaboration with teachers and Elders in Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey community schools. The programme supports teachers and students to engage with mathematics in their own communities and cultural practices. Through exploring aspects of counting, measuring, locating, designing, playing and explaining, students discover that mathematics is all around them. Every year, students gather for an annual mathematics fair to share and celebrate the work they have done.



The programme began in 2007 and has continued to grow over the years with moves to more classroom based inquiry projects that are known as Mawkina'masultinej (let's learn together) projects. The programme has now spread from Nova Scotia to other provinces and territories as an effective and engaging way for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to understand and apply mathematical concepts and principles.

Early Learning



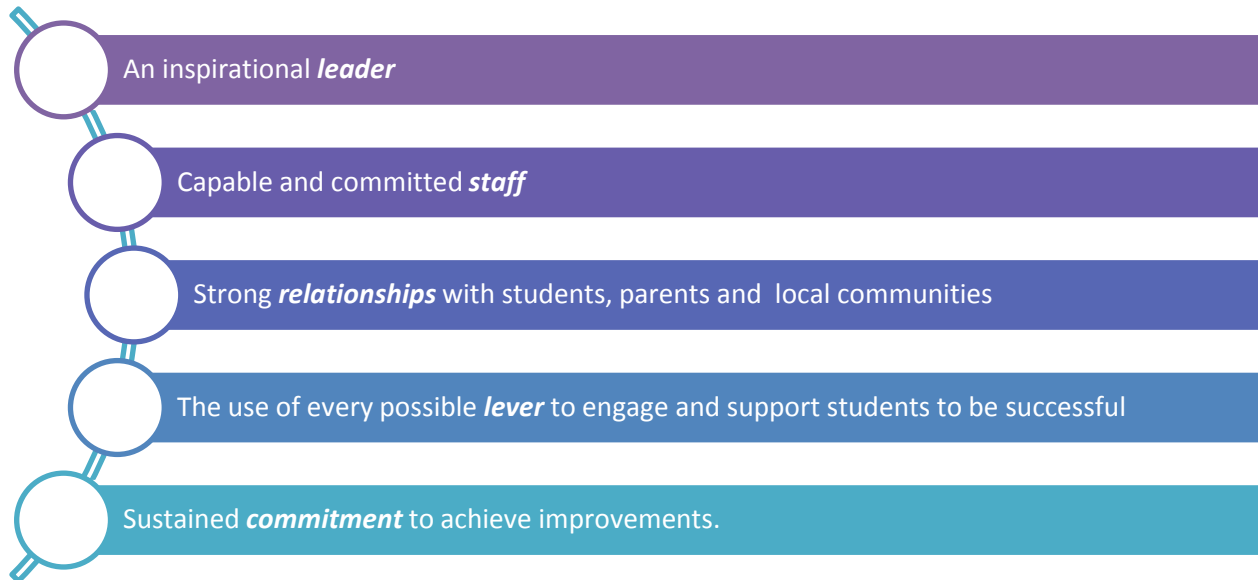
High quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is culturally responsive to the needs of Indigenous children and their families, supports Indigenous children to be confident and curious and builds social, emotional and cognitive skills. It also means working in partnership with Indigenous parents to better meet their children's needs. Such ECEC is best provided in Indigenous communities, where Indigenous children live, and should be both accessible and affordable for parents.

An example of such an approach is a centre in North Winnipeg (Manitoba) that is targeted to children with multiple risk factors. The centre is located at the heart of an impoverished, predominantly Indigenous community. The centre follows an Abecedarian model of early development and learning, which is an intense, individualised, relations-based approach. Families are an integral part of the programme, which includes home visits by centre staff and encourages parents' involvement in the centre. The centre also actively recruits and trains local staff, resulting in lower turnover than would otherwise be the case and greater trust between parents and staff.

Putting the Pieces Together

Pockets of excellence and promising practices exist. Yet much more can be done to help teachers, principals, and communities learn from each other about what it takes to improve education for Indigenous students.

OECD's research identified a common formula in schools that are successfully supporting Indigenous students:



The promising practices described in this brochure provide concrete examples of strategies schools can use to promote well-being, participation, engagement and achievement among Indigenous students.

In sum:

Principals and other **leaders** within schools can inspire change by adopting promising practices.

Staff can make a commitment to developing their understanding of Indigenous students and seeking opportunities to integrate Indigenous culture into their classrooms.

Supporting students and engaging families depends on building strong **relationships**, a responsibility of both school staff and leadership.

Monitoring and reporting and early learning are examples of the sorts of **levers** schools must consider. Some levers will be easier to implement than others, but a range of strategies is needed.

Achieving sustained, significant, positive **change** requires persistent effort on many fronts by as many people as possible.

To Learn More

Visit

<http://www.oecd.org/edu/promising-practices-in-supporting-success-for-indigenous-students-9789264279421-en.htm>

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Read

- OECD (2017), *Promising Practices In Supporting Indigenous Students Success*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279421-en>
- Dreise, T. and W. Perrett (forthcoming), "Promising Practices in Closing the Gap in Indigenous Education: A Literature Review Report for the OECD", OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2017), PowerPoint presentation on *Promising Practices In Supporting Indigenous Students Success*, OECD, Paris <https://www.slideshare.net/OECD/EDU/promising-practices-in-supporting-success-for-indigenous-students>

The Promising Practices in Supporting Success for Indigenous Students Project

Indigenous students face tough challenges in most education systems, but they do much better in some schools than in others and in some education systems more than others. In 2016 four Canadian provinces (Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) and two territories (Northwest Territories and Yukon) participated in a project facilitated by the OECD as part of their commitment to improve outcomes for Indigenous peoples. New Zealand and Queensland (Australia) participated as peer countries, sharing experiences, insights and data.

Project team members visited each of the Canadian jurisdictions to identify promising strategies, policies, programmes and practices that support the well-being, participation, engagement and achievement in education of Indigenous students. The team also reviewed materials such as jurisdictional data, research findings, policies and strategies. Importantly, face-to-face meetings were held for participating jurisdictions to share experiences and learn from one another.

Ongoing work with jurisdictions committed to improving Indigenous student well-being, and school participation, engagement and achievement will examine strategies for implementing the promising practices described here.

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