

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Closing the Gap for Indigenous Students

Ms Virginia O'Rourke, Professor Rhonda Craven, Associate Professor Geoff Munns and Dr Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews from the Centre for Educational Research are investigating how including Indigenous cultures into teaching can help Indigenous students achieve positive results. This research is supported through an Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous Researcher Development grant.

'Indigenous students remain the most educationally disadvantaged Australians', explains Ms O'Rourke. 'Culturally inclusive pedagogies, that is, the integration of elements of Indigenous Australian cultures into teaching practice, are widely assumed to improve Indigenous students' educational achievements and success. However, the actual impact of these teaching methods has not been comprehensively studied. This project seeks to explore the impact of culturally inclusive teaching and learning on Indigenous students' educational outcomes and wellbeing. It aims to "close the gap" between Indigenous students and their peers in school achievement and engagement.'

Using interviews and focus groups with Indigenous children, their parents and school teachers, the research team will explore the factors that enhance the effectiveness of culturally inclusive pedagogies. It will also investigate the specific characteristics of the school environment that may have a beneficial effect on the educational outcomes of Indigenous students.

The results of this study will provide educators and policy makers with the best available effective practice strategies to achieve equitable outcomes in the classroom. The project will provide educational and social benefits for disadvantaged Indigenous students by breaking the cycle of under-



achievement and poor engagement in education. This research will assist young Indigenous Australians to maximise their potential to attain healthy, productive and fulfilling lives and unlock social and cultural benefits for all Australians.

Project Title: Closing the educational gap for Indigenous primary students in low density schools: A qualitative analysis of the impact of culturally inclusive pedagogy.

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