

My Future,
My Culture,
My Way.

NSW Department of Education



Case Study – Todd Edmunds

Who I am?

I'm Todd and I'm a proud Wiradjuri man, born and bred in Dubbo where I've spent most of my life.

I've had a few different roles working with young people in both education and juvenile justice. In my current role as Project Officer with the Pirru Thangkura program, I work with students in Years 8 to 12, focusing on building cultural engagement and goal setting towards completing the HSC. I work across several schools in the Dubbo area, running the program that has been developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (AECG).

Recognising barriers

I believe some students disengage because of the environment that they're in, whether that be at home or at school. If students don't have the right support and are falling behind with school, they tend to fall off or not turn up completely.

If they're not interested, they won't engage at all. Sometimes it can be a fear, not wanting to look silly in front of everyone. That's why it's important to make the classroom a safe space, squashing any behaviour that doesn't foster that positive

environment. For others they'll only put forward what's easy rather than what they actually think or want to say; so it's about leaning in with that support to build their confidence.

Culture is where I've come from and where I'm going

As a Wiradjuri man culture is very important to me and I believe it's important for students to understand who they are and where they are going. Being connected to Culture helps give kids identity and if they have that, they have a better idea of where they're heading. Some kids are already culturally strong and know their mob, but some don't and are trying to make sense of their place in the world. It's about building their confidence so they can branch out on their own discovery.

I make sure there's positivity and learning involved in my sessions. I notice I get much more engagement with the practical ones, rather than written coursework. I know that's the way I like to learn and within our Culture that's the way it's always been, learning through Country and experiences.



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New South Wales
Aboriginal Education
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Aboriginal artwork created by Felicity Adams who is a proud descendant of the Kamilaroi people, currently living and learning on Dharug Country.



In the cultural sessions we'll do some cooking with native ingredients, really building up those practical life skills to take home. We play Traditional Indigenous Games (TIG), we've made our own clapsticks, worked on digeridoos and weavings. These are all great ways to sit down, connect and have a yarn. It's a safe space and I want them to be able to come to me with any challenges they may be facing.

Where do they want to be in the future

The most rewarding part of my role is seeing the kids achieve. We have a session dedicated to where students want to be in future. We talk about how education plays a role in reaching those material goals they might have. Asking those big picture questions around what they want in life? Do they want to buy a home? Do they want to travel? And how their education can help them reach those things.

Our goal setting programs are fun, and they love to have a go. Students will come up with small goals for themselves, which may include simple things like eating healthier, getting a good night's sleep, spending less time on their phone or peaking attendance. Building in time for self-reflection and making sure to acknowledge and celebrate those positive changes.

Support plays a big role

Parents and carers do the best they can. If a kid seems down, or not talking as much, try to have an open conversation and see where you can support. I've got three young boys and I want them to grow up in a community that's positive and supportive. The more positive role models we can have face to face with kids in schools has a positive impact, not only on students but also families.

It's about having an understanding and building better relationships. Remaining open minded and leaving judgement at the door. Without that you can't truly support those in your classrooms.

Want to know more?

Visit My Future, My Culture, My Way, follow the Department of Education on social media, talk to your school, or contact your local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).