

How can schools respond to racism and enact cultural inclusion?

Our school's story and what we've learned

Parafield Gardens High School

A note on this content...

The following slides are excerpts from our presentation at SASPA Conference 2025. Please note, some slides have been removed due to the personal nature of content shared.

Please reach out to the school if you would like discuss our process further.



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that today we are meeting and learning on Kurna Country and that Parafield Gardens High School also exists on unceded Kurna land.

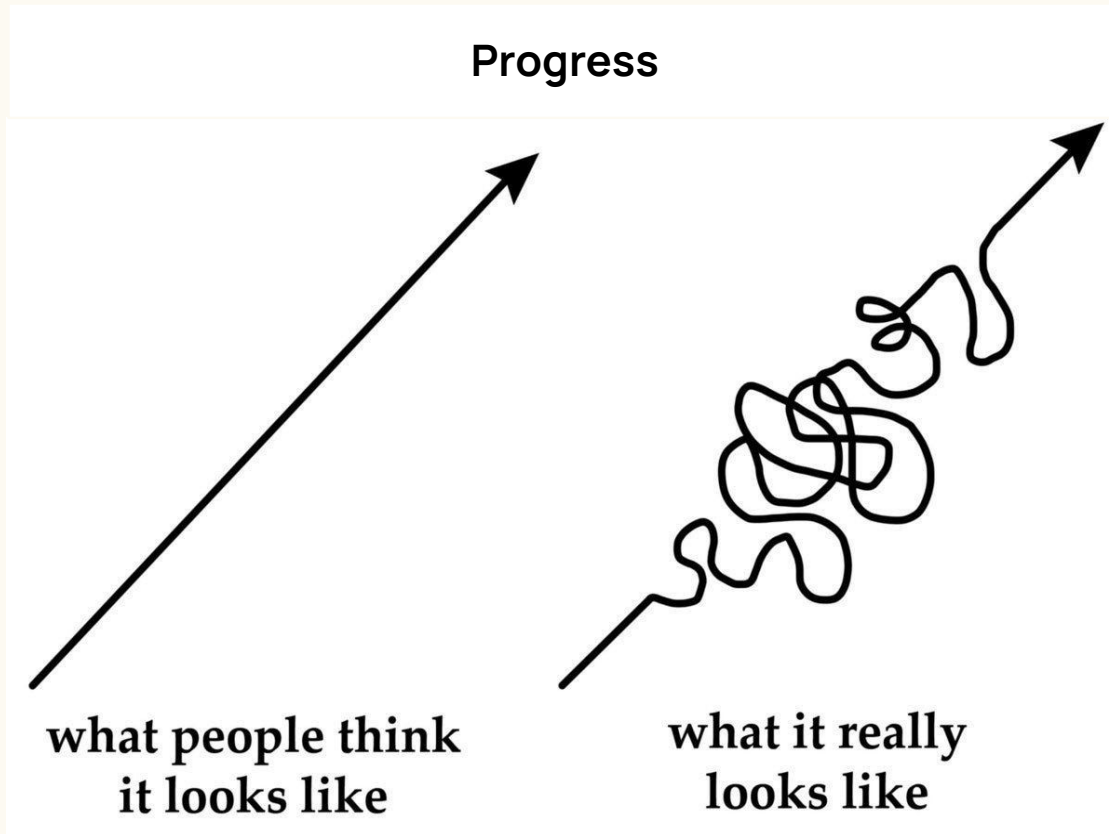
Australia and our school is made up of people from a range of different cultures. The process of colonisation and the beliefs that underpin it, continue to shape Australian society today. The First Peoples of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, have been significantly impacted by European colonisation, and so have a particular experience of racism.

(from PGHS site racism definition)

We maintain this understanding at the fore of our cultural inclusion practices - genuine engagement with reconciliation is the first and most important step towards cultural inclusion in our schools.



Context: Who are we and how did we get here...?

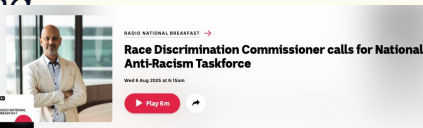


Context: Why do this work?

Because it matters - racism hurts all of us

*The Australian Reconciliation Barometer reported a significant jump in racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from **39 per cent in 2014, to 54 per cent in 2024**. Younger First Nations people reported experiencing higher levels of racism than other age groups.*

Synagogue door set alight and restaurant stormed in latest antisemitic attacks in Australia



Islamophobia is on the rise across Australia, new report finds

By Jason Om

By Raveen Hunjan

7.30

Discrimination

Spectator racism is still rife in Australia's major football codes – new research shows it may even be getting worse

Published: May 27, 2024 6:11am AEST

This isn't just a Muslim problem, it's an all-of-Australia problem." Susan Carland

National consultations show widespread, systemic racism damaging lives

Survey finds 'significant' rise in racism towards Indigenous people in past decade

By the Indigenous Affairs Team's Dana Morse

Reconciliation

Tue 24 Jun

respect movement discrimination

Context: Why do this work? Because it matters - schools have a role to play

The burden to address racism is still predominantly borne by people and communities who experience racism, rather than the systems, structures, and institutions that perpetuate it.

Close to 20% of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds reported experiences of racial discrimination **from their teachers**, and among ethnic minority students **18-30%** of students reported these experiences with the highest levels among those from Middle Eastern and African backgrounds.

SOAR Survey 2017

Recommendation 5: Addressing racism in schools to ensure victims do not leave education facing lifelong disadvantage, and perpetrators do not enter adulthood believing racist behaviours are acceptable and do not attract accountability.



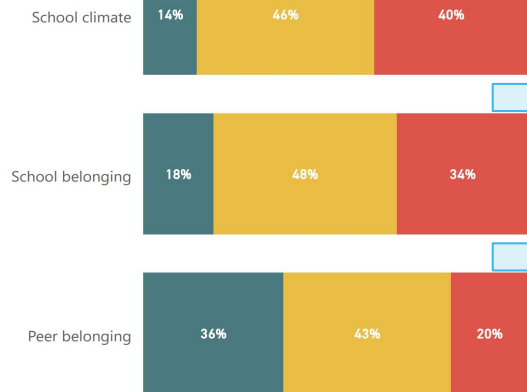
Australian Human Rights Commission: Mapping Government policies and policies relevant to anti-racism, 2024



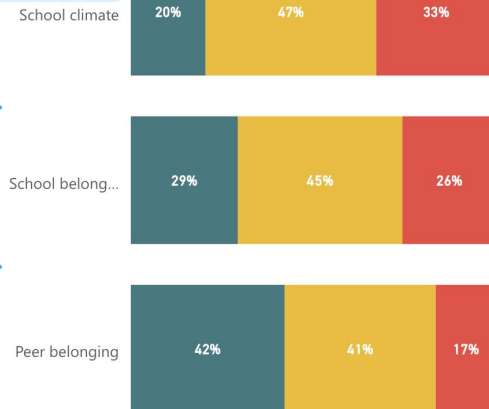
Context: Why do this work? Because it works

PGHS Wellbeing and Engagement Collection Data

2023



2025



“In class, the attitude towards everybody has changed. I feel more comfortable and safe.”

- Year 9 student, female

“You guys are much more on it this year ... last year you hear some crazy stuff ... but this time, there’s a one-on-one, you get to have that conversation.”

- Year 12 student, male

“I have now learned that I disrespected someone’s culture by doing what I did and that is very wrong, I feel so bad ... If I could go back in time and change what I did, I would.”

- Year 10 student, male

Subdomain	Survey year	% high	% change
School climate	2024	19	5 ↑
	2025	20	2 ↑
School belonging	2024	26	8 ↑
	2025	29	3 ↑
Peer belonging	2024	41	5 ↑
	2025	42	1 ↑



The percentage of low wellbeing has increased since the previous survey year



Little or no change in the percentage of low wellbeing since the previous survey



The percentage of low wellbeing has decreased since the previous survey year



Learning Intentions

Understand that your site's context will influence your cultural inclusion policy, process and practices

Know how Parafield Gardens High School has navigated cultural inclusion work

Know how to begin a journey towards a culturally responsive school culture

Success Criteria



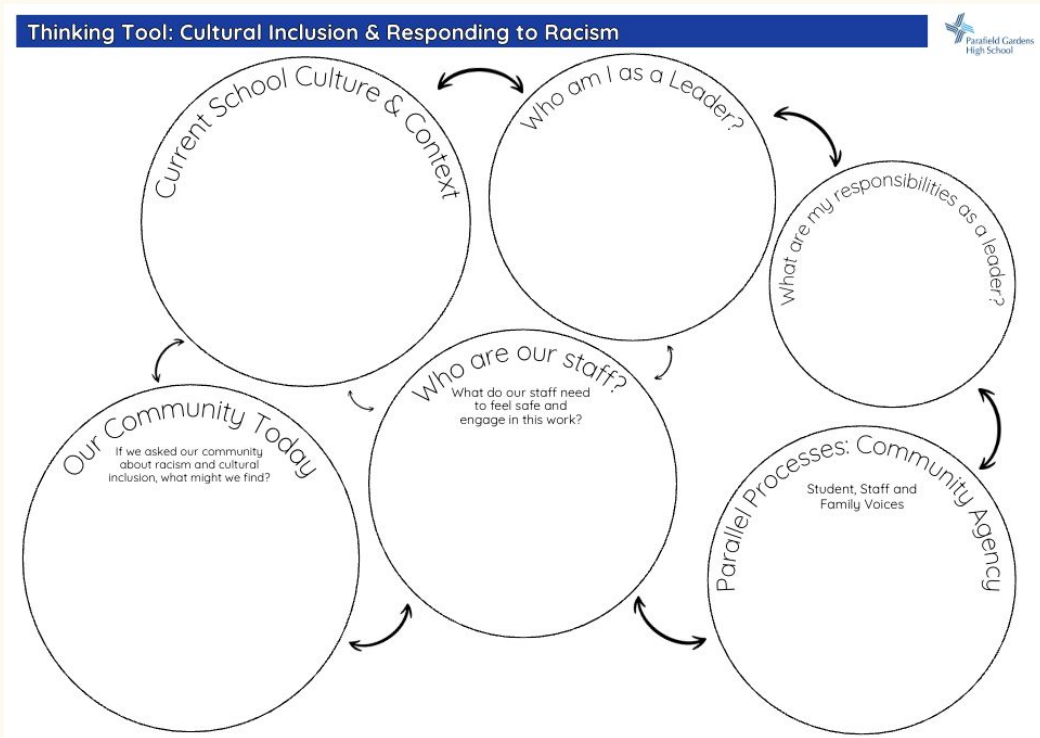
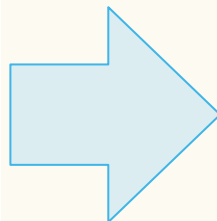
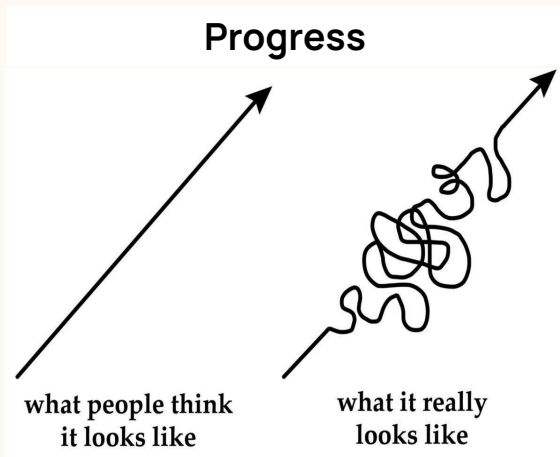
Apply and think through how our journey could be adapted and applied to your site



Leave with a set of **practical resources** and **beginning brainstorm** that you could implement at your site

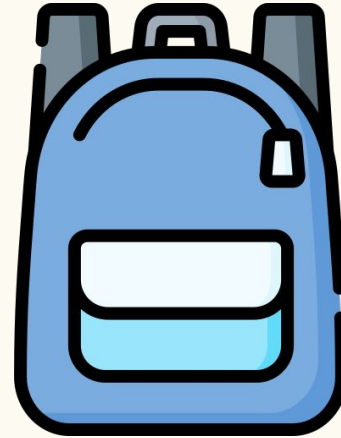
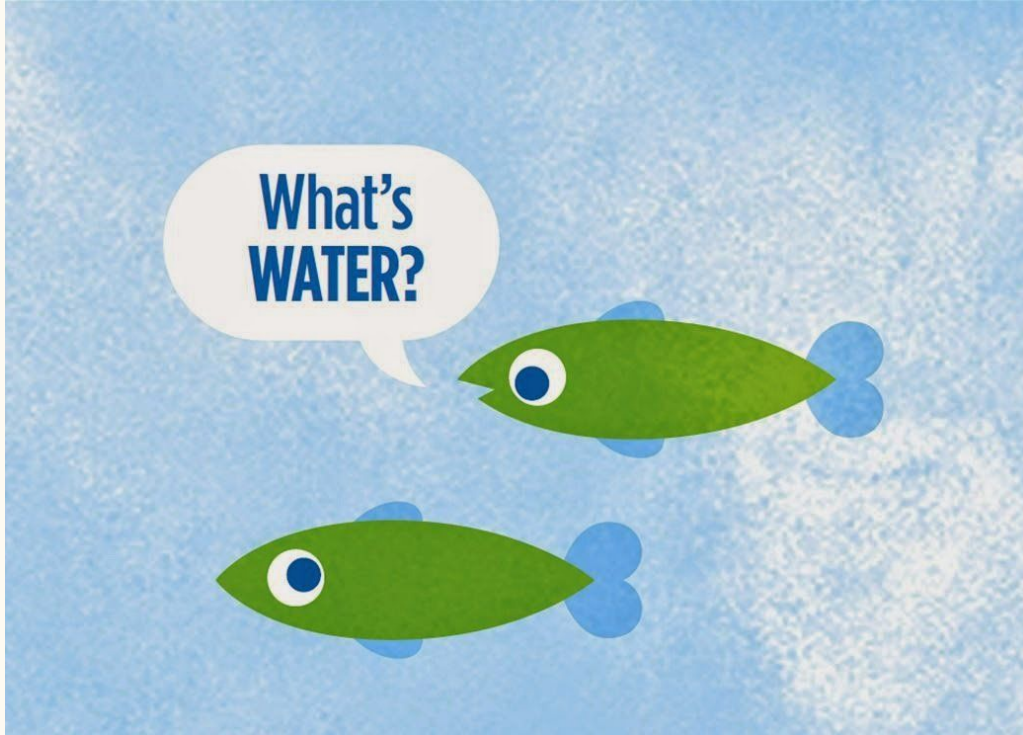
Disclaimer: Not offering solutions or a package, we are offering a way of thinking/framework to start exploring this with your own school community

Practical Takeaway: Interactive Thinking Tool



What is culture?

We all have a cultural backpack



Land
Culture
Place
Time
Relationships
Language
Experiences

Source: Nichols and Comarck, 2009



What is culture? How do leaders fit in?

“Leaders are... the single most important factor in promoting and ensuring equity in their schools” (Miller, 2024)

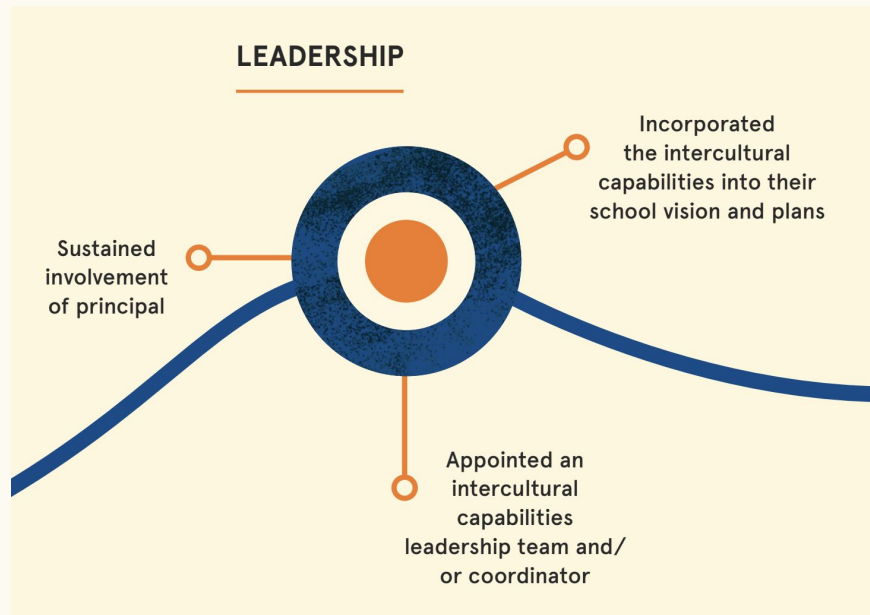


Figure 1: Doing diversity: intercultural understanding in primary and secondary schools (Deakin University, 2015)

Who am I as a leader? What cultural experiences do I bring to my role?

How can I support staff to uncover & acknowledge their cultural backpack and any biases within it?

THINK TOOL 

What are my responsibilities as a school leader?

THINK TOOL 

05:00



Context is our Strength

Our Context at Parafield Gardens High School...

Approximately **30%** of staff are **bilingual** across range of languages and cultural backgrounds

52 languages spoken at PGHS

93.5 hrs bilingual Student Support and **60 hrs** of ACEO student support



Enrolment Data

	Boys / Girls	First Nations students	Language background other than English	ICSEA
2024	681 / 569 ↑	7% ↑	52% ↑	929 ↑
2019	489 / 470	6%	41%	947

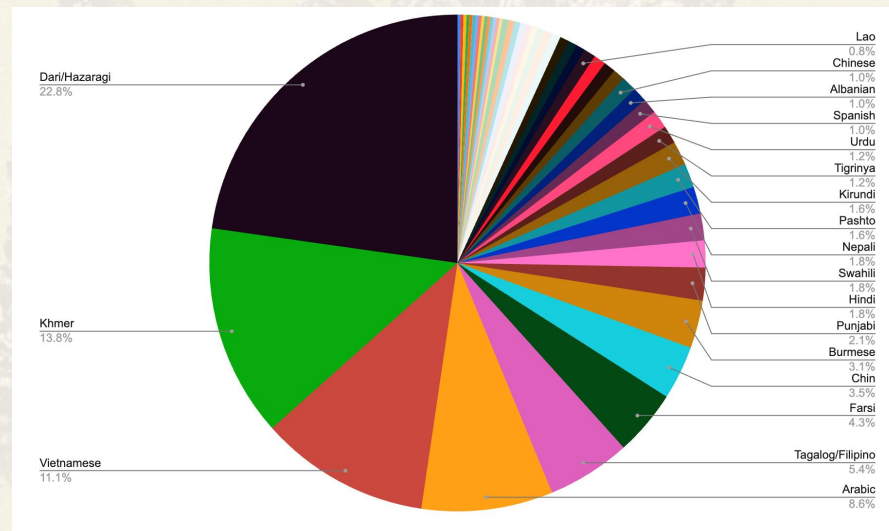
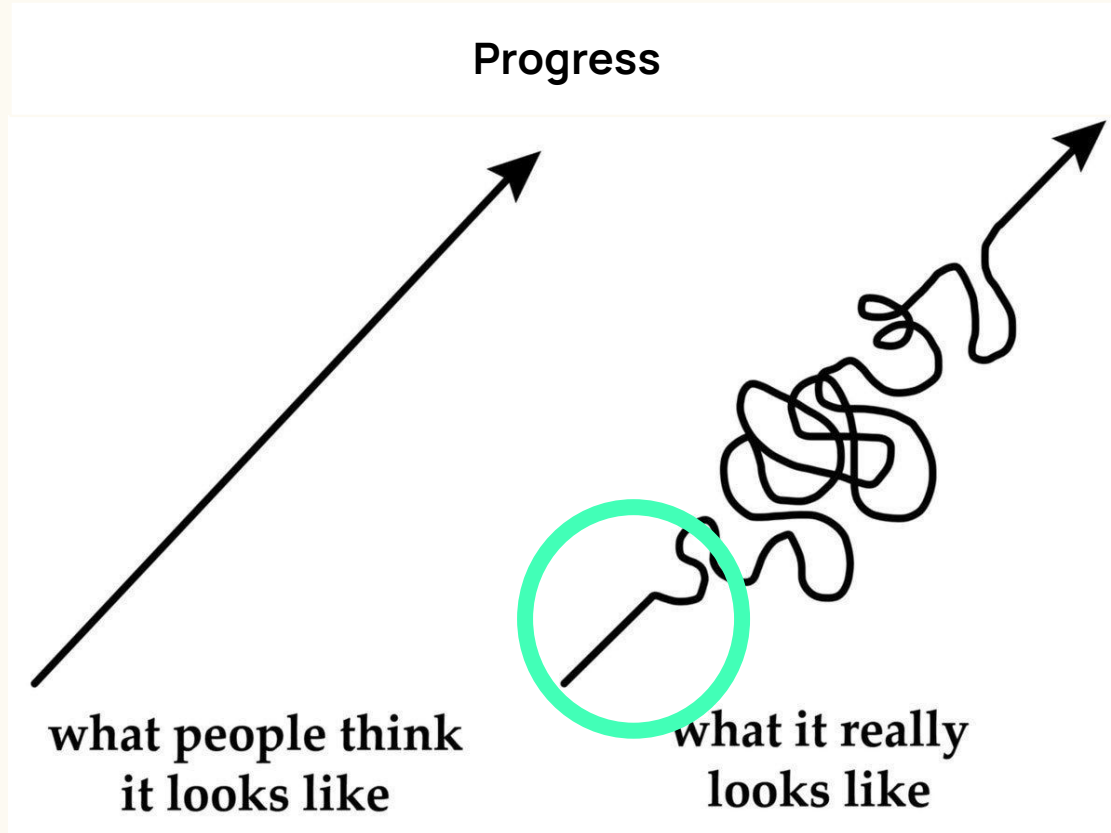


Figure 1: Languages spoken in our school



The Journey Begins...

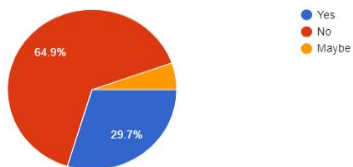


The Beginning: Our Community's Experiences in 2022/23

We started with staff (you could start with students) and in 2023, our staff told us...

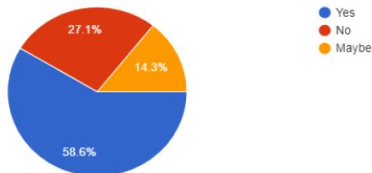
Have you ever experienced racism at a school?

74 responses



Have you ever seen anyone else experience racism at a school?

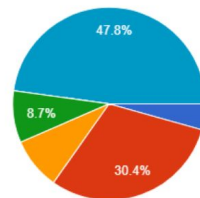
70 responses



The more we asked, the more we learned... and learned some more

If you did not report it, why not?

23 responses

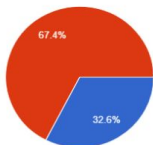


- I didn't know how?
- No point - nothing would have happened
- I didn't feel comfortable speaking to anyone
- I thought it would make it worse
- I didn't think anyone would believe me
- Other

Staff who had experienced racism:

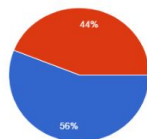
Did you report it?

43 responses



Were you happy with the response?

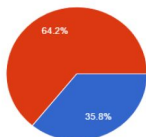
25 responses



Staff who had seen others experience racism:

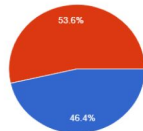
Did you report it?

53 responses



Were you happy with the response?

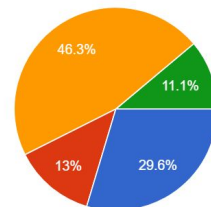
28 responses



And then we started asking our students.
Two year 7 classes, May 2023

How often do you hear racist comments, or read them online while at school?

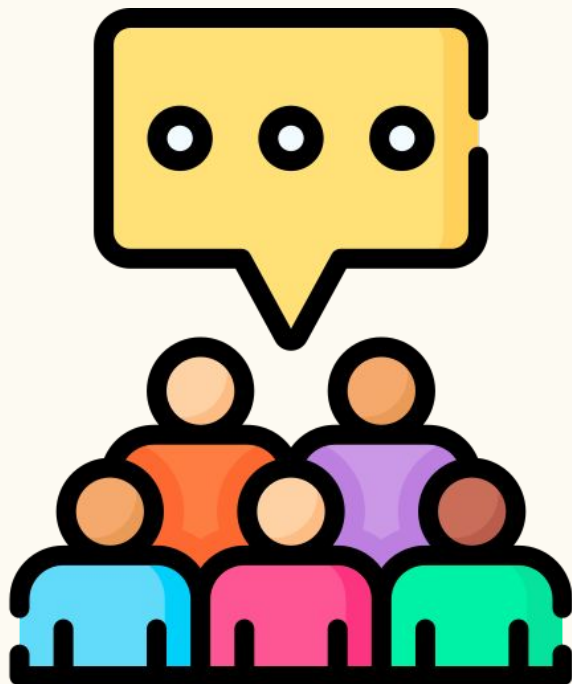
54 responses



- weekly
- daily
- more than once each day
- less than weekly

Your Current School Culture

What would your community say if asked these questions? How do you know? If you don't know, how could you find out?

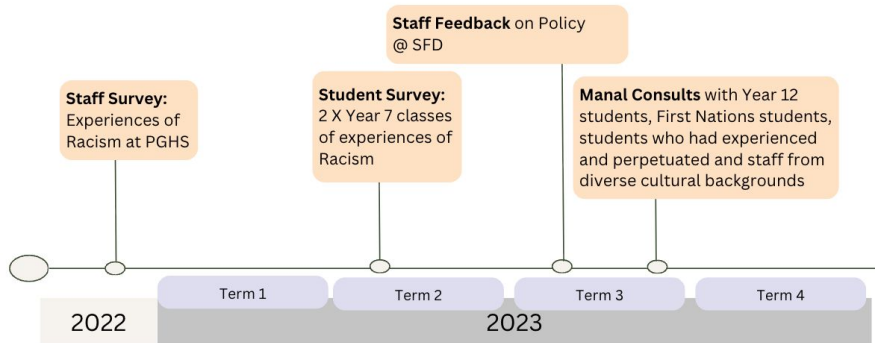


- Have you ever experienced racism at school?
- Have you ever witnessed racism at school?
- Did you report it?
- Were you happy with the response?
- If you didn't report it, why not?

03:00

Our Story in a Nutshell: Who are we and how did we get here...?

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND FEEDBACK

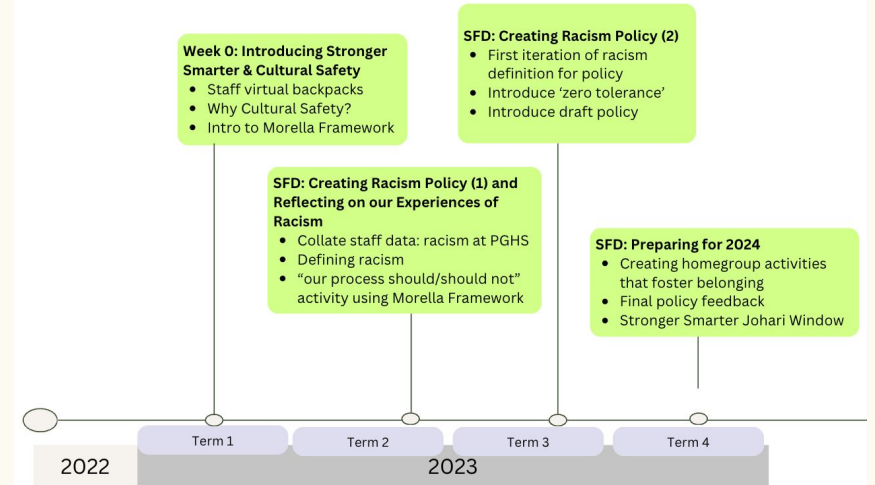


In 2023, our community told us:

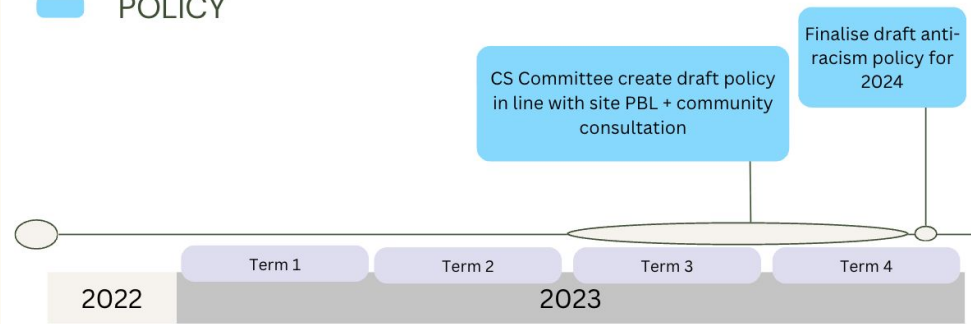
- Staff reported high prevalence of racism, but low awareness and use of reporting mechanisms.
- Of those who did report, over half were not satisfied with the response.

By the end of 2023, our staff Cultural Inclusion committee had created a draft anti-racism policy for implementation in 2024:

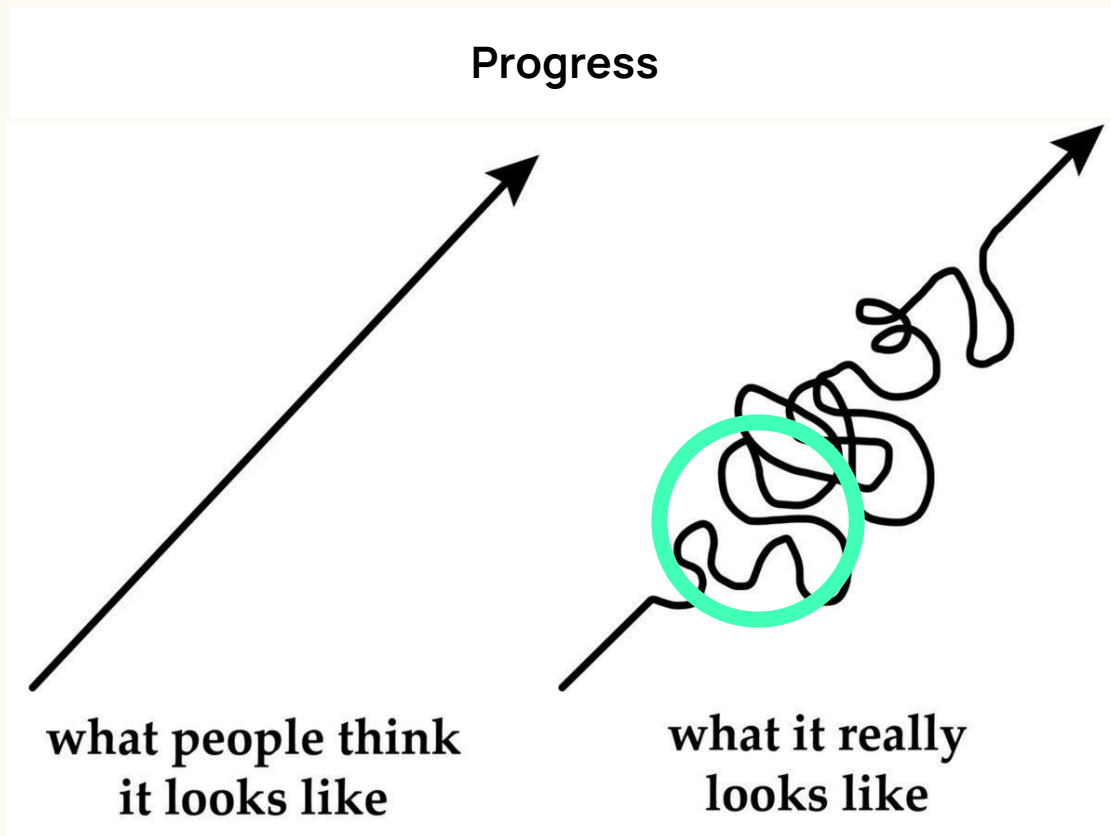
STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



POLICY



2024: The Journey Gets Messy



Areas of Impact



Equity and excellence

Inclusion

Learners from all social, cultural, community and family backgrounds, and of all identities and all abilities are able to access and fully participate in learning experiences.

Breaking the link between background and excellence

Our education system helps to overcome barriers to learning and empowers all children and young people.



Wellbeing

Our learners feel safe, included, and valued. They have access to support, experiences, teaching, and resources to build their resilience and social and emotional skills to positively and confidently engage in learning.

Guiding Principle

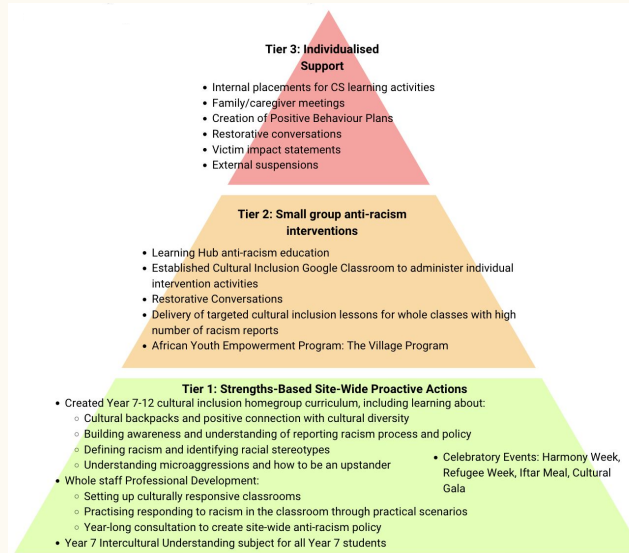
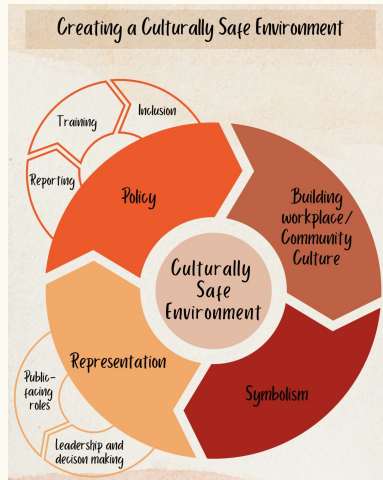


Evaluate for impact

In public education we will keep in focus the difference we are making to our learners, through creating a culture that measures for impact using evidence, research and data and by using what we learn to inform our policy and practice at every level of the system.

Actions to evaluate and inform practice using stakeholder perspectives:

- Staff, students and caregivers
- Uni SA Education Futures Team
- Together for Humanity (TfH)
- African Diaspora Research Project



Behaviour	What you are doing	Positive Behaviours for Learning at PGHS - Cultural Inclusion/Policy
Prevention Level 1 All students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having lessons for all about respectful behaviour • Educating or offering your own experiences or perspective opportunities • Addressing bullying issues from all cultures • Showing courtesy towards other people's backgrounds, cultures or languages and offering your own perspective • Reporting any racism using the wellbeing pathway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students are encouraged to be respectful and inclusive to hearing, talking, and communication • Showing courtesy about students' cultural perspectives and experiences • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds
Intervention Level 2 All students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having better connections of you with the school • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds
Intervention Level 3 All students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This tier is for students who are experiencing racism or bullying that is more serious than the previous tiers • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds
Intervention Level 4 All students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any report of racism or discrimination (this may be the first time, it is always reported to staff or through another pathway) • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds
Support Level 5 All students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical fighting, being on trial • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues • Showing respect and encouraging them to use independent communication to deal with issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds • Showing respect for the differences in each other and for the students of other backgrounds



The Morella Framework: Application to your Context



Where can you see your site in the Morella Framework?

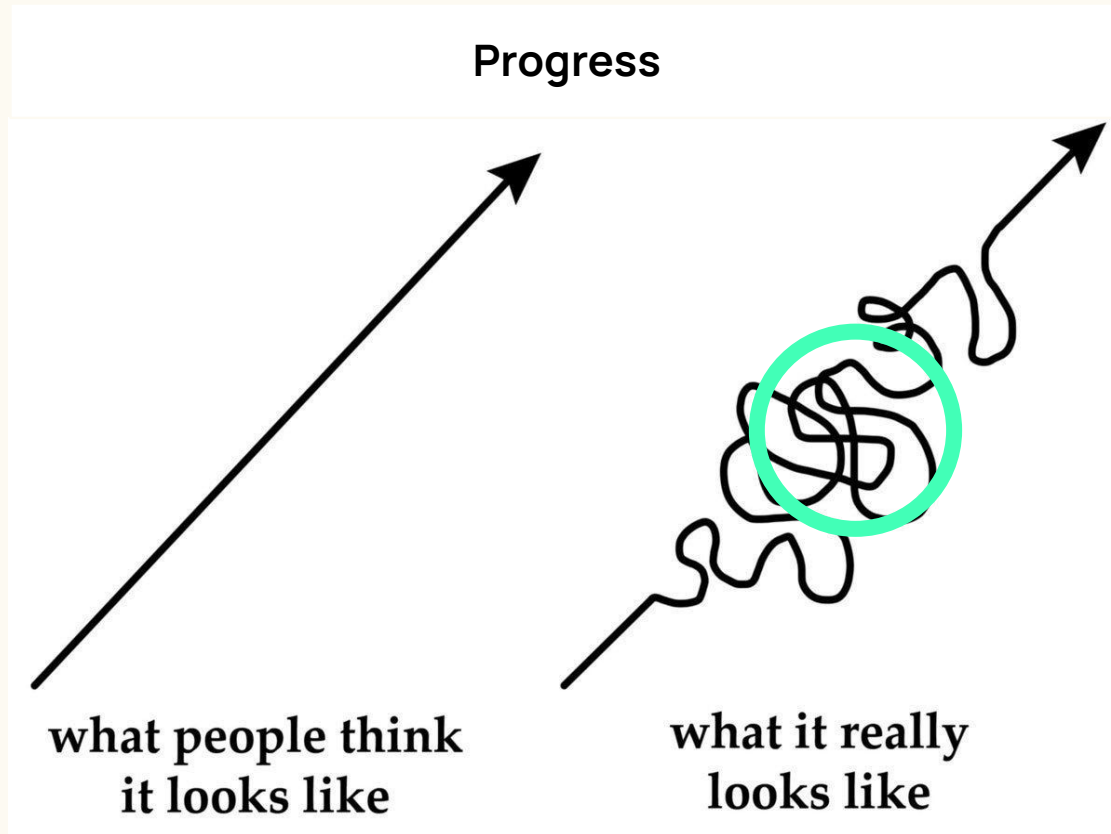
THINK
TOOL 

Instructions:

1. **Reflect** on your site context
2. **Identify** aspects of your site's structure and strategy that aligns with the four domains of the Morella Framework.
3. **Record** examples in your thinking tool

05:00

2024: The Journey Gets Messier (we didn't realise how messy...)



Tier 1 Whole School Proactive Learning

Anti-Racism Policy



- Tier 1: Strengths-Based Site-Wide Proactive Actions**
- Created Year 7-12 cultural inclusion homegroup curriculum, including learning about:
 - Cultural backpacks and positive connection with cultural diversity
 - Building awareness and understanding of reporting racism process and policy
 - Defining racism and identifying racial stereotypes
 - Understanding microaggressions and how to be an upstander
 - Whole staff Professional Development:
 - Setting up culturally responsive classrooms
 - Practising responding to racism in the classroom through practical scenarios
 - Year-long consultation to create site-wide anti-racism policy
 - Year 7 Intercultural Understanding subject for all Year 7 students
 - Celebratory Events: Harmony Week, Refugee Week, Ifar Meal, Cultural Gala

Whole School Lessons

Week 1, Term 1 + Week 5 every term

Topics covered include:

- Reporting racism and PBL at PGHS
- What is/is not racism?
- Myths and stereotypes
- Bystander/upstander behaviours
- Microaggressions
- Why Reconciliation Week and Harmony Week matter
- Super-diversity and the strengths it brings

Intercultural Understanding and First Nations Histories and Cultures

Year 7: 10 Weeks each

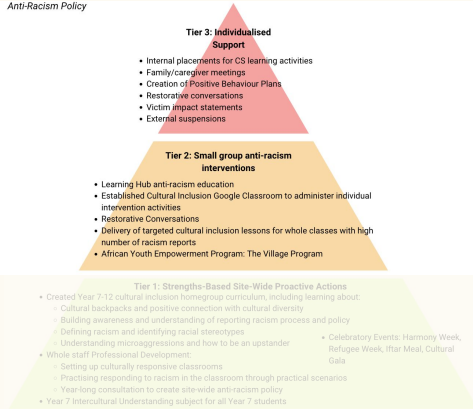
Student reflections after completing both classes:

"A curious questions is respectful and out of curiosity to learn, and a judgemental question is spoken with a rude tone, questioning something impolitely with a bad intent."

"A curious question is asking something respectfully while a judgemental question can be intentionally or unintentionally disrespectful, stereotypical or said in a tone that sounds judgemental"

"I think people should learn about this history because it's an important part of Australia and we shouldn't forget what happened. We can grow from our past mistakes in history and apologise for what has happened, showing respect to Aboriginal people."

Anti-Racism Policy



Level of Behaviour (description from PBL)

Level 2: Your behaviour is disrupting the learning environment, may make people around you uncomfortable and needs to improve

Level 3: Your behaviour is making the people around you uncomfortable and making it hard for you and others to learn

Level 4: Your behaviour is unsafe and illegal will result in consequences

Level 5: Your behaviour is unsafe and illegal and will result in consequences

“I have now learned that I disrespected someone’s culture by doing what I did and that is very wrong, I feel so bad ... If I could go back in time and change what I did, I would.”

- Year 10 student, male

Tier 3 Individualised Interventions - Evidence of Learning

From the reading above, answer the questions below:

What have you learned about Sikh culture? Why is it offensive to touch someone's Turban?

Why do many Sikhs believe that their religious symbols and practices are important?

Reflect on what happened between you and the other student involved. Learning what you have now about Turbans and Sikh culture, do you understand how it was hurtful?

Part 5: Reflecting and Apology

Looking back, what have you learned from this experience about yourself and your behaviour?

Part 5: Reflecting on the Learning

Looking back, what have you learned from this experience about yourself and your behaviour?

2024

Number of reports: 181

2025

Number of reports: 93 (June 2025)



Tier 3: Individualised Support

- Internal placements for CS learning activities
- Family/caregiver meetings
- Creation of Positive Behaviour Plans
- Restorative conversations
- Victim impact statements
- External suspensions

Tier 2: Small group anti-racism interventions

- Learning Hub anti-racism education
- Established Cultural Inclusion Google Classroom to administer individual intervention activities
- Restorative Conversations
- Delivery of targeted cultural inclusion lessons for whole classes with high number of racism reports
- African Youth Empowerment Program: The Village Program

All reports responded to using Tier 2 & 3 interventions

Resource	Description
Morella Cultural Safety Framework	https://morella.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Cultural-Safety-Framework-Summary.pdf Summary of the framework developed by the Morella Community Centre supported by Manal Younus
Racism No Way!	https://racismnoway.com.au/ Range of whole school and teaching resources
Together for Humanity	Professional Development Resources - short courses, both self paced and online This organisation also offers grants for intercultural understanding work (PHGS received a grant of \$10,000 towards our work in 2024)
National Anti Racism Framework (Australian Human Rights Commission)	Mapping government anti-racism programs and policies
Trauma informed and culturally responsive practice	Trauma Informed Practice in our department
Berry Street Education Model	BSEM culturally responsive practices. BSEM trauma informed practices
Restorative Justice	Restorative Justice Practices
Victorian Government	Information for teachers about racist bullying
NSW Department for Education Anti-Racism policy and staff	https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/multicultural-education/anti-racism-education/arcos
Dr. Melanie Baak and team, UniSA	African Diaspora Youth Belonging in Australia.
Paul Miller, English researcher	Anti-racist school leadership: making 'race' count in leadership preparation and development School Leaders Leading Anti-racism and inclusion
Deakin Uni research team	Doing Diversity: Intercultural understandings in primary and secondary schools. Deakin Uni

Our work at PGHS is informed and underpinned by these resources, frameworks and research articles



SCHOOLS ANTI-RACISM NETWORK:

online after school, once per term

Contact:

Melanie.baak@unisa.edu.au

Emily.miller@unisa.edu.au

2025 SASPA Conference Feedback

- Breakout Session 3



EXIT ticket

1. I have an idea about the first step my site could take to implement what I have learned today
2. My engagement with anti-racism work sets the tone for my school

