

# The Facts on Education

## How can we create conditions for Aboriginal student success in our public schools?

Aboriginal children under age 14 make up 7% of all children in Canada and the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing demographic in this country. Eighty percent of Aboriginal children attend off-reserve provincial schools. In terms of school success, there are significant gaps in learning outcomes and graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Nationally, provincially, and territorially, public school educators are committed to closing these gaps, and some success has been realized. For example, in classrooms where Aboriginal content and perspectives were incorporated into a high quality learning program, Aboriginal student grades increased significantly.

Strong leadership is critical to the development of high quality learning programs designed to provide Aboriginal students with every opportunity to succeed in Canadian public schools. Key strategies in creating environments to ensure this success include:

- Relationship building between the Aboriginal community and public school system administrators/educators and meaningful engagement of the Aboriginal community (Elders, Traditional Teachers, etc.) in all aspects of education from policy-making to creating curriculum and resources
- Increasing the numbers of Aboriginal teachers who share their culture and can identify with Aboriginal students and vice-versa
- Creating school cultures where Aboriginal students feel respected and can experience a positive sense of belonging
- Understanding and incorporating Aboriginal perspectives of learning that is: holistic; lifelong; experiential in nature; rooted in Aboriginal languages, cultures, and spirituality; community based involving family, Elders and other community members
- Incorporating Aboriginal perspectives and learning resources into daily curricula for all students – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – rather than presenting them as add-on materials or special topics for some groups only
- Providing teachers with authentic and culturally appropriate resources reflective of local Aboriginal communities and perspectives
- Requiring the inclusion of Aboriginal history and perspectives in teacher training and professional development activities to inform and shape teacher attitudes and instructional practices in classrooms.

With the shared commitment and collaborative effort of all stakeholders – Aboriginal communities; policy makers; administrators, teachers, parents, and students – we can create schools where all students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, can learn and succeed at high levels.

**For online resources as well as the research references that inform this issue, please visit:**

[www.cea-ace.ca/facts-on-education](http://www.cea-ace.ca/facts-on-education)

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