



GUIDE FOR INDIGENOUS PARENTS & BOARDING SERVICE PROVIDERS

A Guide produced for Indigenous Parents & Boarding Service Providers by Boarding Australia under the Parental & Community Engagement (PaCE) Project, funded by the Australian Government

Version 2.0

Last updated September 2015

Original submitted January 2014



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Foreword

Version 2.0 of the GUIDE FOR INDIGENOUS PARENTS & BOARDING SERVICE PROVIDERS is an update on Version 1.0 published in January 2014.

Boarding Australia received further funding from the Australian Government, to progress and enhance the PaCE project outcomes and recommendations from 2013. The continuing focus has been on strengthening knowledge and understanding of how Boarding Australia might assist in 'building bridges' between parents/families in the Communities and boarding providers.

It is important to consider this publication within the context of the broad range of work Boarding Australia has been engaged in over the past two decades. National standards for student boarding providers; nationally accredited staff training; effective Community engagement; student and staff induction and mentoring; restorative principles of engagement; shared learning opportunities through conferences, newsletters and workshop forums and the Boarding Australia website are examples of some of this work.

One of the key principles of restorative engagement is to give everyone involved a genuine 'voice' in the conversation and decision-making. This is especially important for parents and families living in remote parts of Australia who have to send their children away to boarding in order to complete their education. This Guide is intended to assist Parents/Communities, Boarding Providers and all stakeholders to better understand the challenges and opportunities associated with educating Indigenous students from remote Communities. A particular focus has been placed on the issues relating to students living in student boarding facilities whilst completing their education.

Boarding Australia is pleased to report that the Australian Government has acknowledged the importance and value of this work by committing funding for a further two and half years. This will help ensure the on-going success of the Remote Indigenous Parents Association (RIPA) which has been established in the Roper Gulf region of the Northern Territory. Boarding Australia and RIPA-Roper Gulf will be collaborating in 'grounding' the 2013/14 achievements and expanding RIPA to become a national 'voice' for parents supporting their young people gain a mainstream education.

Capacity building and self-determination within remote Indigenous Communities are seen as fundamental to supporting student education. Key elements of this PaCE project have real potential for further development, such as the Remote Indigenous Parents Association (RIPA), Restorative Practice Training, the application of Standards, and further research and development of Both Ways Education (BWE). This Guide will serve as a useful tool for Parents and Boarding Providers.

The content of this Guide is a collection of ideas and contributions from a significant number of professionals and practitioners. Boarding Australia is most grateful for their input and for the support of the Australian Government.



Acknowledgements

Boarding Australia expresses its appreciation to the many individuals and organisations supporting and contributing to this initiative:

- Australian Government
- Australian Parents Council (APC)
- Boarding Training Australia (BTA)
- Charles Darwin University - School of Indigenous Knowledges and Public Policy
- Community Councils
- Community Principals
- Dreamedia
- IBIS Hotels
- Indigenous parents and families from remote communities
- Informed Solutions (NT)
- Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA-NT)
- Northern Territory Department of Education
- Northern Territory Government
- Real Justice Australia
- Student boarding providers

and the many individuals including:

Andrea Andrews	Bjorn Christie-Johnston	Richard Hayes	Terry O'Connell
Rivian Ashley	BJ Christie-Johnston	John Herd	Anita Painter
Anthony Bennett	Chris Colbran	Jim Hopkins	Larissa Pickalla
Lorraine Bennett	Tony Considine	Cathy Huddleston	Justine Rogers
Michelle Bennett	Dan Cox	Juan Huddleston	Mike Schuts
Sharona Bishop	Dr Steve Florisson	David Johns	Ian Smith
Caz Bosch	Jennifer Florisson	Rachael Kendino	Richard Stewart
Richard Brandon	Bonnie Garner	Christine Latham	Sally Sullivan
Joe Brown	Neil Gibson	Scott Mannion	Greg Williams
Druscilla Brown	Peter Gumbala	Scott McCall	Dr Marie Wood
Liticia Camfoo	Steve Hawkins	Annie McCall	
Kerry Christensen	Jaimee Hamilton	John Morgan	



Abbreviations and Terminology

PaCE	Parental and Community Engagement
RIPA	Remote Indigenous Parents Association
ICPA	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
BWE	Both Ways Education
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy

Terms used in this Report

Boarding Provider	All boarding and student accommodation providers, including boarding schools, residential colleges, hostels, family group homes and independent boarding houses are referred to as boarding providers
Community	Community refers to the location where students live with their parent(s) when not residing with a Boarding Provider and attending school eg. Barunga, Belyuen, Borroloola, Croker Island, Kalkarindji and Ngukurr.
Parent	Parent refers to a student's legal parent(s), carer(s) or guardian(s).
Staff	The term staff refers to any adult employed to undertake duties for the Boarding Provider. The term relates primarily to staff responsible for the direct supervision and care of students. In some aspects the term also embraces ancillary staff.
Student	A student is an individual residing at a boarding or student accommodation facility, who is undertaking a school-based education. It includes individuals from rural, remote and urban locations.
Stakeholder	Stakeholder refers to the people, groups and/or organisations with interest in supporting Students in Boarding.



Overview

Purpose of this guide

The purpose of this Guide is to promote effective ways for Indigenous Parents and Boarding Providers to communicate and relate to one another. It includes various checklists and explanatory notes to assist with implementing some of the tools that can help create meaningful interactions.

There is plenty of scope to develop the ideas and explore other possibilities and we encourage use of the Guide as a way to start conversations and build relationships.

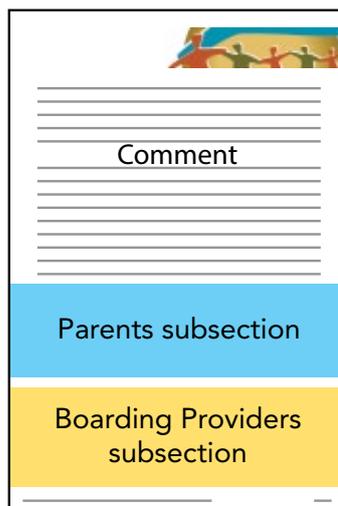
It is intended that the Guide will contribute to improved dialogue between the parties to benefit students who attend boarding to complete their secondary education. This is the foundation of a positive boarding relationship and ultimately, a successful boarding experience.

Using this guide

Throughout this Guide, each section will provide a general comment about the topic, followed by two subsections:

- one for Parents, highlighted in blue
- one for Boarding Providers highlighted in yellow

We encourage those using the Guide to either participate in a workshop facilitated by Boarding Australia, or to work through the companion document, which explains how the Guide can influence practice at all levels of a boarding service. Contact Boarding Australia to find out about workshops or to download the companion document.



Electronic Guide

An electronic version of this Guide is available on the Boarding Australia website www.boardingaustralia.edu.au (free for BA members) with links to access it also on the RIPA website www.ripa.org.au. The Guide will be updated from time to time, based on feedback from RIPA, Parents and Boarding Providers. If you would like to provide information or ideas for the Guide, please visit the Boarding Australia website, or contact the Boarding Australia office (see Contacts section of this Guide).



Standards in Boarding

Why have a Standard?

Standards are published documents that aim to ensure services and systems are safe and consistently perform well.

After publishing our own boarding provider standards in 2012, Boarding Australia has more recently worked with other stakeholders including the Australian Boarding Schools Association, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and the Australian Parents Council, to develop the AS 5725: 2015 *Standard for Australian Boarding Schools and Residences*. This national Standard outlines the minimum requirements service providers need to have in place to ensure that boarders are safe, happy and well supported in their school studies and social lives. The Standard was published by Standards Australia in July 2015.

The AS 5725: 2015 Standard is voluntary which means that service providers can choose whether or not to implement it. Over time however, Boarding Australia believes that service providers will want to (or be required to) demonstrate they meet the minimum requirements in order to assure students and parents of the quality of their service.

What areas does the Standard cover?

The Standard covers six areas:

Section 1 – SCOPE & GENERAL

Provides basic information. It advises the Standard is relevant to providers who offer accommodation to school students in boarding schools and residences, and lists important definitions. For example, it tells us that the word parent covers a boarder's legal parent(s), carer(s) or guardian(s), and also helps us to understand the difference between a policy and a procedure.

Section 2 – GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

Covers the governance and management of boarding schools and residences. Requirements include that parents and students receive appropriate documentation about policies and procedures at induction, and that staff, students and parents are involved in risk management processes and service performance reviews.

Section 3 – BOARDERS

Covers students and what is needed for their protection, safety, health, care and development. This section also covers requirements for students with particular needs. Requirements include policies and procedures that acknowledge the culture and heritage of boarders from overseas, Indigenous communities and isolated country areas, and others that cover boarders with disability and others with specific education needs.



Section 4 – STAFF

Covers staff and volunteers. Some requirements focus on the health, safety and wellbeing of staff. Others focus on making sure that boarding staff are competent in their job roles, do regular training, and know how to manage difficulties including bullying, trauma and boarder/parent complaints.

Section 5 – PARENTS, FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Is of particular interest in this Guide because it outlines the requirements for good parent, family and community engagement. This section is discussed in more detail below.

Section 6 – FACILITIES

Outlines the minimum requirements that need to be in place to ensure that the facilities boarding services provide are built well, are functional and comfortable, and are properly maintained.

All sections in the Standard are important. Together, they focus on providing a safe and positive boarding experience, especially for students and staff, but also for families and community members who are connected to the boarding/residence service.

When boarding service providers meet the Standard, students and families can be confident that the service they have placed their trust in is operating to a nationally acceptable level.

For further details contact Boarding Australia (see Contacts section of this Guide)

What is Section 5 all about?

Section 5 - PARENTS, FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: first outlines the minimum requirements for good parent and family engagement, and then for good community engagement.

Parent and Family Engagement

Educators often say that parents are important “stakeholders” but parents are more than this. Parents are the first educators of their children and they continue to play an important role, both in learning and schooling, as their children move through adolescence to become adults. Because of this, it is much more helpful to think of parents and families as partners.

The Standard does this, defining parent/family engagement as:

“partnerships between parents/families and boarding service management and staff that have a positive effect on boarders’ academic progress and wellbeing, and approaches that support parents/families to be involved in their children’s learning and boarding experience.”

Note the words in italics, and see how the same ideas are woven through this other Australian definition which was developed by the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau to help schools work more collaboratively with parents and families for the benefit of students:



“In the schooling context, parental engagement is an intentional and collaborative strategy to support and leverage the knowledge, capacities and social capital of families to improve learning and well-being outcomes for all children and young people” (www.familyschool.org.au).

The best available research shows that parents’ attitudes and actions have an especially positive influence on students’ education experiences and outcomes when:

- There is a clear understanding of the roles of parents and teachers in learning
- The focus is on linking the practices of families, teachers and students to learning outcomes
- Family practices support learning, and
- There are consistent, positive relations between the school and parents.

The policies and procedures in the first part of Section 5 emphasise that boarding service providers need to have a strong focus on effective communication and information sharing, especially with parents. This is because good communication builds trust and mutual understanding of the importance of working together to support students in their learning. Good communication is the bedrock on which “partnerships for successful learning” can be built between students, their families, boarding staff and school staff.

Four requirements highlight the principle of parents as partners, and encourage service providers to create and maintain regular and positive connections between themselves, the school(s) their boarders attend, and parents/families.

The first is the requirement that service providers *proactively and appropriately communicate* with parents about the *care and support needs, progress and achievement, personal strengths and contributions* of their children/young people. The second is that they *regularly collect and use information about family needs and expectations* to help improve service delivery. The third, that they regularly assess parent satisfaction, and the fourth, that they facilitate *regular communication between all parties, including academic teaching staff and residential boarding staff*.

This may seem like a big ask. Boarder families are often separated by great distance and don’t always have good access to telephones and technology. Boarding and school staff sometimes find it difficult to have regular two-way contact, and their direct communications (e.g. phone and email) therefore tend to be reactive – meaning they occur when an issue arises (e.g. a student is unhappy, unwell, or not doing well in class). So the fact that the Standard emphasises proactive communication around a wider range of interests and issues does present some challenges. However, the benefits of good engagement are many and are well worth the effort.

For example, frequently sharing positive stories about how individual students are contributing in the boarding house/residence, how they are doing in class and homework sessions, and what they are doing in the local community, helps parents to stay close to their children’s lives. It also helps parents to learn about boarding and schooling, and to have “education conversations”. Regularly asking about family needs, expectations and satisfaction opens up opportunities for parents and boarding staff to learn about each other’s worlds, develop shared understanding and find solutions together. As well, when boarding and teaching staff regularly communicate, they can better connect student “learning and living” and therefore provide more holistic and targeted support to individual students. Positive three-way connections between boarding, school and home/home communities create real potential for the development of successful ‘partnerships for learning’ that fully focus on individual students’ needs.



Partnerships with Parents and Families

The next part of Section 5 focuses on requirements relating to partnerships with parents and families in four areas. These are partnerships that:

1. Support parent/family engagement in boarder learning
2. Involve parents and families in policy development and decision-making
3. Enrich boarding programs and activities, and
4. Consider the diverse needs and expectations of parents/families with students who have particular needs.

To address these requirements, service providers and boarder families will need to decide what 'partnership' means to them in their context. The definition in the Family-School Partnerships Framework (2012) is a good starting point and can easily be adapted to suit boarding/residence contexts:

"Family-school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents and other family members of students at a school. Effective partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, and shared responsibility for the education of the children and young people at the school."

It is also helpful to understand that while 'partnership' is a rather formal sounding word, it basically means that two or more people or groups have agreed to work together to achieve something they all want. People/groups bring different views and expertise to partnerships, and the Family-School Partnerships Framework makes the important point that the contributions each partner makes need to be appreciated as equally valuable.

Community Engagement

The final part of Section 5 outlines the requirements for community engagement which the Standard defines as Weiss, Lopez and Rosenberg (2010) did:

"The support, services and advocacy activities that community organisations, including businesses and faith-based institutions, provide in order to improve boarder learning and wellbeing, and promote parent/family engagement."

There are only two requirements in this section. The first is that boarding service providers have communication protocols in place that support positive relationship building with partner schools, community services and organisations. The second is that boarding heads and staff actively engage with school and community representatives, agencies and partners to develop relationships and partnerships that improve opportunities and outcomes for boarders. In summary then, while the requirements are briefer, they essentially mirror those for parent and family engagement – but in a wider context. They direct attention to positive relationship building to generate interest, engagement, commitment and resources from diverse sources. They also direct attention to the thoughtful development of partnership principles and approaches that very deliberately aim to improve opportunities and outcomes for students. This deliberateness strongly indicates the need to document the opportunities that are being created, and the reasons why, and to reflect on if not formally evaluate the benefits.

Many boarding schools and residences draw on community individuals and organisations to support



their boarders' health, sport and career interests, and provide them with important opportunities to serve and experience the local community. So, more than anything else, this section of the Standard invites service providers to reflect on and extend the good things they are already doing.

Parents and families can positively engage in boarder learning and schooling by:

- Having high expectations for their children to do well in their studies and in other ways
- Talking about their hopes for their children's education and making plans with their children for the future
- Encouraging their children and praising their efforts to persist and improve
- Attending school and boarding induction activities
- Talking about learning, and the importance and enjoyment of learning
- Talking about different ways of learning and different strategies to use
- Taking an interest in assignments and homework, and sometimes helping with the content
- Taking a positive, "solution finding" approach with boarding and school staff to address things that are worrying or upsetting their children
- Attending school and boarding activities throughout the year
- Understanding that the ways parents can best engage in learning, schooling and boarding change as children get older
- Talking with teenagers about social issues, and making links between their school work and current events
- Actively staying in contact with boarding and school staff
- Being involved in boards, committees and working groups
- Participating in surveys and other requests for opinion.

Boarding/residence and school staff can support parents and families to engage and partner in their children's learning and schooling by:

- Developing understanding of effective parent/family engagement and how an engagement culture can be created
- Undertaking professional development in parent, family and community engagement
- Putting in place communication policies and procedures that emphasise proactive communication and information sharing around a wide range of interests and issues.
- Regularly asking parents/families for feedback and using this to support students in their learning and living, and also support boarding and school continuous improvement
- Frequently reaching out to parents wherever they live, and especially if they are "hard to reach" for geographic, work, technology or other reasons
- Working hard to build respectful and trusting relationships, and develop a shared sense of responsibility



- Developing annual engagement plans that include a focus on the four partnership types in AS5725: 2015 as outlined in 'Partnerships with Parents and Families' section above.
- Dedicating staff and other resources to engagement activity
- Creating more deliberate links between teaching and boarding/residence staff
- Providing opportunities for parents to connect with each other and develop support networks
- Recognising that parents who appear not to be engaged may well be contributing in important ways outside of school and boarding.

A tool to help boarding service providers achieve Section 5

Parents have both the right and responsibility to engage in positive ways with boarding service providers and schools to improve their children's schooling experiences, academic outcomes and sense of wellbeing.

Boarding service providers and schools have the right to expect that parents will support their children's schooling, and the responsibility to create opportunities for parents, families and communities to engage in positive ways.

Boarding Australia has identified four outcomes that will be achieved through effective engagement with Indigenous parents, families and communities in boarding/residence contexts:

- Indigenous parents will have increased knowledge about boarding, their children's learning in a boarding environment, how they can support this, and what else they can do to help their children's progress towards Year 12 attainment
- Indigenous parents will have improved relationships with school and boarding staff, and feel more confident about engaging in education conversations as "true partners"
- Improved student engagement in learning and schooling as a result of Indigenous parents' connection with the boarding culture and their working with teaching and boarding staff to achieve shared goals.
- Improvement in the resolution of student issues as a result of staff and parent collaboration.

The tool presented here outlines some key things that will support children and young people's schooling and boarding experiences through improved communication, relationships and issues resolution. These have been identified through Boarding Australia's 2013 Parent and Community Engagement (PaCE) project, other engagement work, and academic research.

The tool does not provide complete coverage of Section 5. Its main focus is sub-element 5.2 (Parent and Family Engagement).

Boarding Australia is committed to evolving a framework and guide for assessing and evaluating continuous improvement for all sections.



Indicators for effective Indigenous Parent Engagement

Parents are engaged in student learning and boarding

1. Consistently communicate high expectations for their children to achieve academically and in other ways.
2. Often talk about their hopes for their children's education and future, and help them to make plans.
3. Often talk to their children about learning and the importance of trying hard and persisting.
4. Encourage their children and give them praise.
5. Often ask boarding and school staff questions.
6. Regularly participate in phone conversations about their children's learning, wellbeing and academic outcomes.
7. Know what the boarding service and school expect of students, and support their children to meet expectations.
8. Address non-academic challenges that are worrying or upsetting their children before they become a bigger problem.
9. Respond to school and boarding communications and requests in good time.
10. Ask for information and updates about the school and boarding facility.
11. Are involved in school and boarding activities, including committees and events.
12. Contribute ideas for improving boarding service delivery.
13. Expect to be involved in decision-making processes and get involved in them.
14. Are networked to other boarding parents and support organisations.

Communication, stakeholder input, and complaint management are the building blocks for effective parent and wider Community engagement in boarding experiences.

A simple definition of parent engagement is:

"actions by parents, underpinned by collaborative partnerships with the school Community, that facilitate learning and promote the wellbeing of children and young people."

This definition was put forward in an unpublished working paper prepared for the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau, a joint initiative of the Australian Parents Council and the Australian Council of State School Organisations, by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2012). The listed actions and attitudes are also adapted from this paper.



Parents have increased knowledge of boarding and how they can support learning in boarding environments

1. Have a regularly updated, plain English handbook that outlines operations, expectations, support, and contact details that is distributed at least annually to all families.
2. Have an orientation program for new students and parents.
3. Have a parent engagement policy statement.
4. Have a homework program that provides meaningful opportunities for parents to engage in their children's learning.
5. Regularly schedule remote and other Community visits to achieve multiple purposes, including obtaining stakeholder input and developing stakeholder knowledge and capacities.
6. Regularly distribute newsletters and boarding reports to families in accessible formats.

Indigenous parents have improved relationships with boarding and school staff and the confidence to engage with them

1. Recognise, respect and respond to cultural differences and individual differences.
2. Respect Indigenous knowledge.
3. Develop their own understanding of effective engagement approaches and practices.
4. Have good communication protocols in place.
5. Regularly communicate with parents to provide student information, seek feedback and ideas, and report back on follow-up actions.
6. Provide positive encouragement for parents and families to be pro-active in communicating with boarding and school staff.
7. Invite parents to significant school events and support their participation where practicable.
8. Create and support opportunities for parents to be involved in school parent associations.
9. Create and support opportunities for parents to connect with each other and develop support networks.
10. Actively seek to minimise barriers to parent engagement.



Improved student engagement as a result of parents' engagement in the boarding culture and their working with teaching and boarding staff to achieve shared objectives

1. Recognise that parents who appear not to be engaged may be contributing in other important ways.
2. Have regular three-way (student-staff-parent) phone/internet conversations to inform and en-gage parents in student progress, outcomes, wellbeing, issues and achievements.
3. Encourage and support parents' personal involvement in parent/teacher interviews (face-to-face/phone/internet).
4. Have a mentoring program for new and at risk students.
5. Have a program that educates students and shares key messages with parents about personal hygiene, health and nutrition, and the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol.
6. Have an activities program which engage all boarders and is designed in consultation with parents.
7. Regularly conduct individual student wellbeing reviews and communicate appropriate information to parents.
8. Provide parents of Year 11 & 12 students with career guidance reports and kits.

Improved resolution of student issues as a result of staff and parent collaboration

1. Have a Pastoral Care Committee made up of teaching and boarding staff that meets and communicates regularly.
2. Inform and engage parents in the early resolution of concerns and problems.
3. Affirm parents' role as the first and continuing educators of their children and promote the importance of parents consistently communicating high expectations and aspirations for their children.
4. Record student and parent engagement in conflict resolution and make every reasonable endeavour to avoid student suspension.

One definition of Community engagement is:

"the support, services and advocacy activities that Community-based organisations - including businesses and faith-based institutions – provide in order to improve student learning and promote family engagement"

(Weiss, Lopez and Rosenberg, 2015)



Identified Barriers in Boarding

These barriers were identified during the 2013 PaCE Project by Community members. It is important that both Parents and Boarding Providers consider these points and discuss strategies to minimise or overcome them.

Barriers with Parents and Community

1. Funerals – Sadly, this is a frequent interruption to student education. Funerals in communities affect parents and Boarding Providers, in that students will often need to travel back to Community to attend the funeral. Some parents have stated that boarding students are often sent back to Communities too early given that the final details for the funeral had not yet been organised. The PaCE 2013 Project found that parents all agreed that there should be a policy that unless a child is directly involved in the actual funeral ceremony, they should not return to the Community until two or three days prior to the funeral. One parent stated that it should only be “students from closest family who come home from boarding school for the funeral.”
2. Ceremonies, Festivals & Community Sports – as with funerals, there are similar issues, where students who participate in such events will often return to a Boarding Provider late or not until the next term. Students miss out on important schooling. It is difficult or impossible for them to catch up on missed lessons. If a student misses school for too long they will fall behind the group and it is difficult for a teacher to find the time to help a single student.
3. Prioritising children’s education – It is important that parents give first priority to their child’s education, as it is a key gateway to employment and a future for that child. This may mean choosing to let a child stay at school for the whole term rather than bringing them back for a Community event.



Barriers with Boarding Providers

1. Parent and Student handbooks are sometimes non-existent or lacking in detail. A comprehensive handbook is important and should be kept up-to-date and made available to parents and students.
2. Boarding Provider Community liaison staff should be identified and contact details provided to the parents and Community schools and agencies.
3. Early intervention involving parents when their children are causing concern must be reported to the parents as soon as practicable. Parents should be encouraged to support the Boarding Provider in resolving matters.
4. Student suspensions cause grief and shame in the Community. Most times, students suspended by Boarding Providers refuse to attend the local Community school while they are on suspension. This means they fall further behind with their education.
5. Cultural orientation of staff is important. Staff need to be trained in cross-cultural awareness. Otherwise, students and families do not feel comfortable discussing sensitive matters with staff. This can lead to misunderstandings and a break-down in communication.
6. Boarding reports received by parents are often non-existent or offer very little information. This needs attention to ensure parents have the necessary feedback to help them understand how to support their children.
7. Mobile phones – This issue has caused concerns with many parents, especially when students are using mobile phones after lights out. Some students will not get enough sleep, will get into arguments, or will misuse their mobile phone when it is not supervised appropriately. The PaCE 2013 Project found that parents unanimously agreed that mobile phones should be taken from students at night time to reduce such problems.
8. Career guidance - parents want advice from schools on their child's Personal Learning Plan (PLP).
9. Parents are asking for more Community visits from Boarding Provider staff. This will help build positive relationships between the Community and the Boarding Provider. It will enable parents and families to put a face to the name. It will also give staff a personal understanding of the student's family and home environment.





Frequently Asked Questions

The following list of questions and responses have been collected from stakeholders asked to identify typical issues to do with Boarding. The first 15 questions are found in the “What Parents Want to Know About Boarding” DVD, created during the 2014/15 PaCE Project. If you would like a copy of this DVD please contact Boarding Australia (see Contacts section of this Guide).

Questions from “What Parents Want to Know About Boarding” DVD

1. How are my children supervised at night? – worried about male & female interaction

All Boarding Providers should have a policy about male & female interaction between staff and students, and about students with other students. If you cannot find information on this in a Boarding Parent handbook, then you can contact a houseparent at your child’s Boarding Provider, and ask them to either email or post you a copy, or to explain it over the phone. If you are not happy with the policy, it is best to talk to either the Head of Boarding, the Principal, or with an agency or Principal in your Community. If you suspect something is not right you should act promptly to make sure your child is alright.

2. What happens if my child gets homesick?

If your child wants to come home halfway through the school term, it is best to talk to your child, and find out why they want to come home. You should contact staff and discuss the matter before making any promises or commitments to your child.

3. What happens if my child gets sick? Will you notify me?

All Boarding Providers will have access to some medical facilities, and will have medical procedures if a Boarding Student gets sick. Make sure you inform the staff if your child has any special medical condition such as food allergies or special medication. You will be notified as soon as possible if there is an emergency situation.

4. When can I talk to my child? How does this work?

Most Boarding Providers have set times for parents to talk to your child. It is usually best to talk to your child on the weekend when they will have more free time, or after school on weekdays. Avoid making contact during homework, meetings or dinner times, or after bed time. Most Boarding Providers will take mobile phones from students before bed, so you will not be able to call your child on their mobile. However, you can call the Boarding Provider at any time if there is an emergency, as there will always be someone that can get your child if needed.

5. Can I come and visit and will I be able to stay overnight?

All Boarding Providers encourage parents to visit their children whenever possible. Parents need to check what are the best times to visit and usually these will be outside of school hours. Some Boarding Providers do have accommodation available at times, but it is best to check first by contacting the Boarding Provider.



6. Can my child go out on weekends? What happens on weekends?

All Boarding Providers allow their Boarding Students to sign-out with parent-approved family and friends on weekends. Boarding Providers also support children to play sport with local AFL, rugby, cricket, basketball and soccer teams. There are also many other activities such as swimming, fishing, camping, going to the movies, shopping, and travelling to festivals. You can find out information about what will happen by looking at a Boarding Provider's Parent Handbook, which is usually available on the Boarding Provider's website.

7. Are our kids fed well?

If your child is complaining or if you are concerned about the meals you can contact staff and discuss this with them. Encourage your child to eat the meals provided to ensure they are getting a balanced diet. Some students prefer to buy 'junk food'. This should be discouraged. Parents should contact staff if they have any concerns.

8. What happens if my child does the wrong thing?

Boarding Providers have clear rules and boundaries. Students are frequently reminded of their responsibilities. Usually, staff will give a warning if students are doing the wrong thing. If they continue with the behaviour they risk being sent home. High risk behaviours such as drinking, smoking, fighting, inappropriate relationships and truancy will have serious consequences. Encourage your child to cooperate with staff and keep away from bad behaviour. Let staff know if you have any concerns.

9. What can I do to help my child settle into boarding?

In order to help your child settle into boarding ensure you make contact with the Head of Boarding by phone, Skype or in person. Remember Boarding Staff will spend more time with student boarders than teachers. They are the people who take your children to after-school and weekend activities, and will want to develop trusting and respectful relationships with them. The Head of Boarding will also help your child by talking to teachers if he/she are struggling with classwork at school. Encourage your child not to be ashamed or afraid to ask for help from the Boarding Staff if they need it.

10. Is there after-school study time/tutoring homework for my child?

All Boarding Providers have homework or set study time. Some will do this in the school soon after school finishes using the teachers while others will do it after dinner using tutors back at residence. Study time is similar to school; students shouldn't be contacted during this time unless it is an emergency.

11. How many Aboriginal children are there in your boarding program? Do any come from our Community?

Most Boarding Providers will take more than one child per Community, to ensure children have a close friend for support. In most cases there will be children from neighbouring or associated communities that speak the same or similar languages. There are a number of ways to find out who is boarding with a particular Boarding Provider, and which schools they are attending. Most Boarding Providers will have some information on their website.



12. Do the staff have respect for Aboriginal and different cultures?

Most teachers and Boarding staff will have been through cultural awareness training before, or soon after starting their job. If you have any concerns, the Boarding Provider and ask them what cultural training looks like, when staff do it, and if there is an opportunity to include training specific to your own culture.

13. What if they have to come home for sorry business? Who organises it?

Boarding Providers understand the importance of funerals. It is important to check this with Abstudy and the Boarding Provider before making travel arrangements. Don't make any promises or commitments with your child until you have checked with staff. It is important that your child returns to school as soon as possible after sorry business so that they don't miss out on learning.

14. What happens if my child goes missing?

Boarding Providers try their hardest to keep track of where your children are at all times. However, when children do go missing, it is often at big events like the AFL game in Darwin. In most cases the child will go off with family members even though they have been asked not to if they haven't been signed-out in advance. All Boarding Staff have a process of tracking down these children. Firstly they will ring the child's mobile if they have one and at the same time speak to their friends who were with them at the time they went missing. In most cases these actions will allow the Boarding Provider to find the child quickly. Parents will be contacted when a child goes missing to explain the circumstances. In the event that the child is not located after all these steps, the police are called.

15. What happens to my child when there is a cyclone?

The Northern Territory Government have designated safe buildings and cyclone shelters in and around Darwin and Palmerston. Boarding providers will prepare cyclone food and water packs for each student well in advance for an approaching cyclone. If the Government gives a direction to go to the shelters, Boarding Staff will Boarding Students to their designated shelter and stay with them until the cyclone is gone.

Additional Questions

16. What happens if my child needs to come home?

It is important that parents check with staff before making any arrangements. Abstudy conditions apply.

17. What's the principal like?

A good way to find out what the Principal of your child's school is like, is to contact them. This can be by email, phone, or by going and visiting them face-to-face. You can find the phone number or email address of the Principal on the school website. You will usually talk to the Principal's personal assistant if you phone their number, so make an appointment so that the Principal can call you back when they are not busy. Remember, Principals are very busy people.



18. Who's going to pay for the extra things? What are the extra things?

The school may have a special fund to assist with extras. Check with staff and ask if there is a policy and how you can apply for assistance. Extras might include such things as books, personal items such as toothpaste, soap and other toiletries.

19. What am I meant to do to help my child at school (e.g. with school work)?

A good way to help your child with homework and school work, is to ask the school to email or post you the outline of their homework and schoolwork for the year. This way you can see all of the due dates of your child's homework. You can then remind your child when their homework is due, and contact teachers if you feel your child needs more help. The best way to help your child is to let someone know if your child is not coping or they tell you they need help. It is also good to encourage your child to talk to their teacher or houseparent if they want more help.

20. Is my child good in class?

All Boarding Providers and schools should give you reports every term. If they do not, you should contact the school or Head of Boarding and ask them to email or post you the report. The only way people will know you are not getting the reports is for you to contact the school and let them know.

21. What are the teachers like?

Most schools will have parent-teacher interviews at the end of term, when parents will be able to talk to teachers one-on-one. If you are unable to visit the teacher during this time, contact the school and ask if an interview can be done over the phone, via Skype or via video conferencing.

At the start of the school year, it is usually possible to arrange visiting the school and meeting with some of the teachers as well. Most schools will also have open days for new students enrolling in the school, You can visit and see what the school is like and meet staff.

22. Can we meet the houseparents?

Where possible, Boarding Providers send staff representatives to the Community to meet with parents. Make sure you ask about any visits so you can meet the staff. Sometimes it is possible to attend school events or visit the school at the start or at the end of the term. If you want to meet staff it is best if you can let them know you are coming. This will allow staff to plan their work and make time to meet with you.

23. I've heard it all this before, what are you going to do that others haven't tried?

Don't give up trying. Make it clear that you are really interested in supporting your child and make regular contact with staff. Encourage your child to keep in touch and let you know how things are going.

24. Will my child be bullied?

Boarding Providers have clear policies about bullying. If you have any complaints or concerns make sure you contact the staff immediately. Encourage your child to report any bullying behaviour to the staff.



Make sure your child does not get involved in bullying other students.

25. Will my child be safe?

Encourage your child to do the right thing and not get involved in inappropriate behaviour. Boarding Providers employ staff who are well trained and understand how to care for students. There are safety rules for students and it is important they listen to staff and do the right thing. If a parent hears about something that is not right, they should contact staff immediately.

26. How will I know if there is an issue?

Keep in regular contact with your child. Make sure staff have your current contact details and ask them to let you know if there are any concerns. If you hear of something that sounds like a problem or concern, contact staff immediately and check it out.

27. How much will it cost for my child board?

Check the Boarding Provider website for details or contact staff for information. Check to see if Abstudy covers all the costs or if the school has any special support fund.

28. How will I get my child to and from the boarding facility?

Abstudy usually covers this cost. Sometimes the Boarding Provider will do a bus run to Communities within driving distance. Check this with staff.

29. What if I have no money to help my child?

Check with Staff to see if there is any assistance available from Abstudy or from any special assistance fund.

30. Will my child get an education?

Boarding Providers and schools are interested in every student and will assess students to make sure they get the best support and encouragement from teachers and boarding staff. It is important that parents contact the staff if they have any concerns or if their child has any special learning needs. This may include hearing or vision problems. Make sure you let staff know of any special needs at the time of enrolment. Take an interest in your child's progress and ask for term reports and regular information about your child's progress.

31. Is it worth it to send my child to boarding?

The education of your child is most important. Without a good education it is difficult to get a job. Encourage and support your child in every way you can. Keep in touch with staff and your efforts will be rewarded with positive outcomes for your child.

There are no doubt other questions that Parents have. If you have any suggestions please contact Boarding Australia (see Contacts section of this Guide).



Restorative Principles of Engagement

“Focus on what makes you the same, not what makes you different.”

Anne Heiss, Indigenous Author

There is a long-established view held by many, that punishing poor behaviour will somehow make things better. However, the emphasis here, is to encourage stakeholders (Parents & Boarding Providers) to focus on building positive, respectful relationships, as a much preferred alternative. The purpose of this Guide is to encourage stakeholders (Parents and Boarding Providers) to engage in ways that are Restorative rather than Adversarial.

Start by considering what connects you to someone, rather than what separates you.

Restorative principles of engagement, are about creating learning opportunities in a shared space, through fair and respectful processes. This is part of an ongoing journey, which encompasses the past, present and future. The process is structured around feedback, collaboration and sustainability. The aim is to develop a clear sense of direction for stakeholders involved in the process.

A question that is central to this, is:

“How do we build connections and relationships?”

Another pertinent question is:

“What assumptions do we hold?”

It is important to have a sense of where we are coming from in order to have a conversation about where we want to go. The solutions to the issues that are being faced by parents and communities with children away in boarding, will come out of having conversations, which draw people into a space of shared understanding.

Restorative principles of engagement are about having the ‘right’ conversations. It is also about ensuring that the process is ‘fair’.

Most importantly, people need to have the opportunity to share their story. This is a time when others need to have good ‘listening’ skills.

Basic Tenets of Restorative Practice

‘Harm and Relationships’

Adversarial (Blame) approach:

- What happened?
- Who is to blame?
- What punishment or sanction is required?

Restorative approach:

- What happened?
- What harm has resulted?
- What needs to happen to make things right?

REAL JUSTICE

FAIR PROCESS

The Central Idea

“... individuals are most likely to trust and cooperate freely

- whether they win or lose
- when the process is fair...”



Restorative Questions

Restorative questions are designed to give understanding to the past, present and future. The questions are to help people think carefully about the impact their behaviour is having on others and to help them make sense of what happened, who is affected, and how to make things better. It helps people understand how to make better choices in the future. The same questions can apply in any situation and are equally valid for adults as well as students.

For further information visit: www.realjustice.org

TELL YOUR STORY

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have you been thinking about since?
- Who has been affected by what happened?
- In what way have other people been affected by what has happened?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?
- Do you still want to be here? Why?

Drawing people in

NOT

Pushing people away



Facilitators of Fair Process

An effective Facilitator will have a clear knowledge of the Restorative Principles of Engagement and the Restorative Practice Framework.

The challenge is to identify what changes are required to enable a return to positive relationships and a safe environment for everyone to share and feel safe. It is also essential to help others understand and make the necessary changes to ensure a sustainable outcome.

Facilitators of the process need to be clear about what this looks and feels like. As a general guide, facilitators should consider the following:

- Stakeholders need to experience a 'fair and respectful' process.
- This processes must be able to 'open' stakeholders up to new learning.

CHECKLIST FOR FAIR PROCESS

- Opportunity To Speak
- Opportunity To Explain & Be Listened To
- Safe & User-Friendly Environment For Conversation
- Clear Guidelines For The Process
- Option To Withdraw At Any Time
- Opportunity To Make Things Better (Restorative)
- Opportunity To Discuss & Agree On Consequences
- Opportunity To Change Behaviour
- Opportunity For Healing And Closure



Parent Views

To help understand the views of parents in the Community, a Facilitator could organise a workshop with a group of parents and invite feedback on the following questions:

- Tell me about your own school experience?
- What did you enjoy most about school?
- What was most difficult challenge in attending school?
- If you had the opportunity to change anything about your own school experience, what would it be?
- What do you want for your young people?
- How do you think getting an education might help your young people?
- What are the greatest influences against this happening?
- What could the Boarding Providers do that might make coming and staying at school more likely?
- What is the hardest thing in getting young people to attend school?
- How might Community and parents be helped in supporting their young people?

Commitment to a Restorative Culture

It is important that Providers have an explicit commitment to Restorative Principles of Engagement. This should include:

- Formal staff training in Restorative Practice
- Formal practice procedures that support 'fair process'
- Engagement – opportunity to have a say in a safe space.
- Explanation – understanding why things are happening and providing understanding for why it is important for people to tell their story.
- Expectations – clarity about how participation will be of benefit and what is required to achieve closure.
- Community engagement processes that support Standards as described in this Guide
- Learning opportunities for students that enable them to make sense of their behaviour and to understand what is necessary to achieve and sustain positive and respectful relationships.



Learning goes Both Ways

When we interact with people there are some important things to remember:

1. Every interaction is in many ways, a cross cultural interaction;
2. Those interactions are complex and challenging;
3. We all have skills in dealing with forms of cross-cultural interaction.

Learning is complex and challenging

Understanding that learning goes Both Ways is a process of recognising the challenges and complexities of the interactions we navigate on a day to day basis and understanding that none of us has a privileged access to knowledge. In a Boarding context, this means that learning both ways “bring(s) together Indigenous Australian traditions of knowledge and Western academic disciplinary positions and cultural contexts” (Batchelor Institute, 2007).

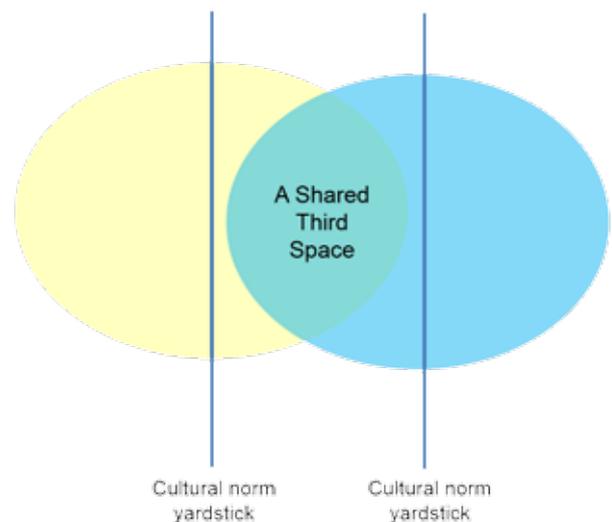
Education is a shared learning experience between the students, teachers, carers and support staff, parents and the broader community. Learning is a conversation and that, by definition means it goes both ways.

Any time we interact with someone else, we create a shared experience. This is what some people call a ‘third space’ – a new culture! We get to know something about that other person and they get to know something about you and as the shared experience grows, so, hopefully does the amount of knowledge we have about that other person. Learning going Both Ways is about:

1. Recognising that any interaction is a learning experience;
2. Realising that there is a lot about others that we don’t know ;
3. Understanding that even though we don’t know, doesn’t mean what we don’t know is not valuable.

It’s common to think that things we don’t know or understand are strange and not valuable, but this is a fairly egocentric view. As a member of one cultural group, there’s a lot we know, but there is an awful lot we don’t know.

Remember too that culture isn’t the same thing as ethnicity. Culture can also be based around, gender, age, socio-economic status, political persuasions, language, faith, interests and hobbies. So you can imagine you have a wide variety of cultures that you participate in every day and that the interactions you have are complex and multidimensional – yet, you manage quite well (most of us do most of the time). Partnership in a boarding arrangement is the bringing of our whole selves and not just our ethnicity to the processes of learning





Bringing these two important points together means recognising the importance of not assuming what you know and the things you do are the only ways things can be known and done. Understanding that learning goes Both Ways is recognising that:

1. You will learn and therefore need to change, but that this will happen in a way that works for you;
2. You need to provide the opportunity for others to do the same in ways that work for them.

Learning Both Ways is challenging because it means you need to consider questioning things you have held for certain or held dearly for a long time – they might be things that you have thought are a ‘givens’ about the world – things that were beyond question.

Boarding for Indigenous Students

Learning Both Ways has important implications for the success of boarding relationships. If you take this concept seriously, then one of the key activities is the scoping of our personal and institutional cultural spaces. This might involve:

- building a relationship between partners based on honesty and transparency;
- acknowledging the different cultures of each group – students, parents, teachers and support staff;
- focussing on shared goals to create and strengthen the culture of the shared, third space;
- provide leadership to go into places that are challenging and uncomfortable – these are the places where learning happens;
- be prepared to share – ideas, yourself and control (your personal power and cultural/institutional controls).

By taking on this approach to the boarding-student/family relationship, the learning community (that is going to exist in some form anyway) is strengthened, more inclusive of all the partners and safe:

safe to participate, safe to share honestly, safe to express concerns, safe to learn.

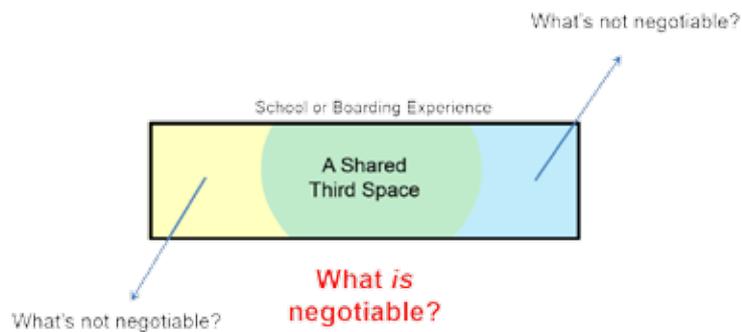
When discussions occur in a safe third space, learning communities (the students, their families, schools and boarding facility staff), the option of open and honest communication means that there will be some times:

1. when negotiation will need to take place, views will have to change and positions shift;
2. when things will not be negotiable and the safety of the space will allow people to explain what those things are and why.

It is important to reflect on what the negotiables and the non-negotiables are in the process of talking with each other. Parents, schools and boarding facilities will all need to recognise that there are some things that just cannot be negotiable (cultural law and responsibilities, government policy and legislation – things that can't be changed quickly or even at all) Conversations need to occur around what can shift and how the relationship progresses if important things cannot be accommodated. Recognising that the conversation will be messy and complex and people will be vulnerable is vital, as is a sustained commitment to seeing the conversation through.



Dialogues centred in safe spaces are fundamental if Indigenous students and their parents are to be empowered to engage. So often western institutions remain in powerful positions because they are unable to or unwilling to move - their position is fundamentally non-negotiable. Schools are schools and that is the way they operate. Boarding facilities have always operated in this way. The hard and challenging work is in sifting through the cultural practices to work out what can and what cannot change.



When parents engage with a boarding provider, they should be able to:

- feel as if they are able to play an active role in their children's education and that it is a collaborative learning experience;
- gain a clear understanding of the expectations of the Boarding Provider;
- be comfortable to explain what they want from the experience, explain what is and what isn't negotiable for them in the relationship and express this in a way that is understood;
- feel as if the Boarding Provider is willing to understand and accommodate them on things that are important;
- feel comfortable enough to say when they or their child is feeling unsafe.

When Boarding Providers provide a service, they should be able to:

- recognise they are engaging with the child and the parent (and the community) in a collaborative learning experience;
- understand the cultural nature of the experience they provide;
- be clear about what they expect from the child and the parents and the reason why – why are things the way they are? What are the areas where there is room to negotiate?;
- be comfortable enough to explain what they want from the boarding experience, explain what is and what isn't negotiable for them in the relationship and express this in a way that is understood;
- be willing to shift on things that are negotiable as a way strengthening the relationship and allowing the power balance to adjust;
- feel as if the parent/community is willing to understand and back them in areas that are important and not negotiable;
- feel comfortable enough to say when they or their staff members are feeling unsafe.



Factors for frontline staff to consider

When Parents and Boarding Providers engage with one another there are a number of factors that will determine the success of the visit. The following ideas have been contributed from professionals engaged on the frontline with remote Indigenous Communities.

Approach

- Your attitude will determine your success. Be a positive, culturally aware and readily available contact person. Get to know and value all parents and develop good communication with them that is culturally appropriate. If you lack the knowledge and skills to do this appropriately, get a culturally-aware, proactive liaison person. “You can’t have a partnership without a relationship, and you can’t have a relationship without a conversation. You’ve got to have the conversation. Everything starts here” (What Works, 2009).
- A good strategy is – Under-promise & over-deliver

Communication Mediums

There are a number of communication mediums to consider when communicating with parents and Communities. These include:

- Websites – Most Boarding Providers should have a website with contact details, information about enrolment, photos of boarding and student activities, links to a Parent Handbook, Student Handbook and general information about boarding.
- Parent Handbooks – Most Boarding Providers have Parent Handbooks or the equivalent with information to inform parents about how the Boarding Provider operates and how and when a parent can communicate with the Boarding Provider.
- Student Handbooks – Similar to the Parent Handbook. This should be readily available to students and parents.
- Phone – All Boarding Providers should have access to a Community phone contact. This is essential, especially in an emergency.
- Video Conferencing & Skype – The 2013 PaCE Project explored the use of Skype communication between Boarding Providers and parents. In most situations it proved to be an effective medium and is very popular with students, parents and siblings.
- Emails – Most of the larger Boarding Providers will have email addresses for each staff member, while smaller organisations rely on shared devices.
- Fax – Although this may be seen as an ‘older’ form of technology, many Communities still offer facsimile services which can be an efficient way to send and receive forms, letters of consent and medical information.
- Posters in Community - Posters at key areas informing people of key events – posted up at the local store / Centrelink / Post Office areas.
- Newsletters – Newsletters once or twice a term from Boarding Providers with lots of photos is a positive way to inform parents of what the children are doing. This can be done in electronic and paper format depending on the resources and technology available to the parents.

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- Facebook and social media tools – Depending on the organisations internet policies, Facebook and social media tools may be an alternative form of communication to engage with parents and students. Access to social media tools over the internet is becoming increasingly common across remote Indigenous Communities in Australia, with many using it as a prime alternative to text messages and phone calls.

Following up

If the Boarding Provider does not have a Parent Handbook, Student Handbook or Website, contact the Boarding Provider and discuss your concerns directly with staff.

Engaging Parents

It is important to consider multiple communication mediums when engaging parents as what may work with one parent or Community may not be effective when engaging with another. When utilising these mediums, communication should be consistent, with the same team of staff engaging parents to ensure a strong relationship is developed and maintained.

An emphasis should be placed on visual mediums when communicating with parents. Parents will not only enjoy seeing their children on screen but also listening to staff – staff can visually explain elements of Boarding and school on a whiteboard (on screen). Videos are a simple and inexpensive way to convey important messages to parents and Communities. While there may be a question as to where and when to show these, it does not always have to be in a dedicated session. There is potential to play videos at the Community store, health centre or to share the video over Facebook or on your website.

As social media tools become increasingly popular with Indigenous Communities, it is important that as an organisation social media policies be developed to be not only safe, but beneficial to the communication practices between Boarding staff and Communities. Purpose-specific Facebook pages could work for Communities, parents, Boarding staff and teachers.

Building strong relationships with Parents and Communities

- A Community engagement plan is an effective way to ensure regular, consistent and informative communication between the Boarding Provider and parents
- The key to good communication is to consider the relationship when engaging, not just the information being conveyed
- Try to directly involve parents with day-to-day operations with students
- Contact parents about student achievements and positive experiences, not just when something goes wrong
- Ensure parents feel comfortable visiting residences, attending functions and talking with staff. This includes collecting students from residences and communicating with Boarding staff
- Parents should be on a first-name basis with more than one Boarding staff member and know who to call in any circumstance



- Parents should have a student and Parent handbook, and be able to utilise a complaints process when needed
- Have a formal routine in place to visit the Communities in which your clients reside. Make connections initially with the aim to forge relationships
- Communities need to see you regularly enough to build a degree of familiarity and trust
- Parents don't like surprises. Keep them informed early of any changes or developments which may be trending in their child and get them involved as soon as practicable
- Build on ex-student relationships to stay in touch with Communities and to build new relationships when doing Community visits
- Don't generalise that all parents are the same. You are catering for hugely diverse needs and circumstances
- Ensure you ask people from the different Community and language groups you are dealing with, to provide cultural feedback on the structures and procedures you have in place
- Know your Community, population, language and decision-makers
- It is important to make connection with the local Community school. Regard them as your first target to build up trust. A positive relationship with parents and the Community should quickly follow. The school will usually be up-to-date with what goes on within the Community such as funerals, ceremonies, festivals, etc. It is also usually the best place to communicate with parents, due to the resources of the school eg. Skype, phone, fax and internet
- Consistently fostering relationships with parents will gain their trust. This will carry by word-of-mouth to other parents and members of the Community. Students will know that the Boarding Provider has a strong relationship with their Community and will likely be more engaged as a result
- It is important that Boarding staff have the opportunity to visit remote Communities to better understand where students in their care come from. Building relationships is the key to successful outcomes with children

"We have found families are sincerely interested – like any others – in their children's education and wish to know as much as possible."

Timing

- For parts of the year, parents in Communities are not readily available
- Some parents and students move between Communities during the Dry Season but might stay put in the Wet Season. They may also stay in towns in the Wet Season
- Pastoral families are usually very busy in the Dry Season while being less busy over the Wet
- Physical access is often an issue in the Wet Season
- It is best to communicate with parents in Communities on days/dates which do not coincide with, or immediately follow royalty, Centrelink or pension payment days
- Avoid Community visits during school holidays
- It is important to be flexible with your timeframe and be willing to visit more than once, to fit with Community and parent priorities



Collecting and evaluating information

- Sensitive information such as a death within a Community needs to be respected in a culturally sensitive manner. It is important to note that such information can have far-reaching effects, not just affecting one particular student, but all others who are related or from the same Community. It is a whole Community's 'sorry business'
- Sensitive information should only be shared with parents/guardian, teachers and Boarding staff that are directly involved with the student and the councillor assisting the student
- Information regarding Community visits should, at the minimum, be shared with the school Principal, the boarding facility manager and the school's equity or wellbeing staff person, where there is one
- When accompanying a student home on suspension, all stakeholders should be fully aware of the steps put in place to support the student prior to the suspension
- Keep records of Community visits including family and Community profiles for each student
- Records held by Boarding Providers should include:
 - ◊ A record in each student's file of regular, positive interaction between parents and Boarding Providers. Communication records must be maintained in an orderly manner.
 - ◊ A log of parent & student complaints with evidence of appropriate and effective resolution.
 - ◊ Record of regular, effective Community visits by liaison officer, Boarding manager and/or supervisors, with details of contacts, outcomes etc
 - ◊ Provide information for parents informing them how to notify a residence in the case of change of circumstances i.e. contact details and student issues
- Use a wide range of success indicators when assessing Community visits eg:
 - ◊ parent indicated understanding of information provided
 - ◊ parent indicated they were happy with information provided, etc. These should be measured using a continuum rather than only 'yes' or 'no' answers. This will allow for a more thorough evaluation of the visit as well as allowing for staff not attending the Community to get a better picture of the visit when reading the report
- It is important to return from Community visits with key information from parents to their children, such as local sport results and highlights, friends/family who have visited the Community, family messages, Community organisation events etc. Short movies with people speaking / sending messages could work well, such as playing them when students are settling for dinner or into homework sessions
- Plan how conversations may develop prior to visiting a Community eg. Develop simple questions that you may ask; topics to avoid; individual student/school information that you can take including posters and pin up boards; key messages that you might share with parents/families to help them support their children



The Five Rights

The list of questions, based on the **Five Rights**, has been developed to assist parents and carers when engaging with Boarding Providers.

1. Right People



- Am I talking to the right person?
- Is this their area of responsibility?
- Are they a decision maker?
- Do they need an interpreter to understand me?

2. Right Time



What time should I call?

- Day Time 9am- 5pm- Principal and Support Staff
- After 5pm- Boarding Supervisor

Does the school need to know of any Community business?

- Ceremony
- Funeral
- Other events

Does the school need to know of any personal matters?

- Work
- Family

3. Right Place



- Is it ok to do this by phone?
- Should I go to the school in person?

4. Right Language



- Who can help me understand this letter?
- Who can help me write a letter to the Boarding Provider?
- Does the Boarding Provider need to organise an interpreter?

5. Right Way



- Do I have the list of school contact telephone numbers?
- Do they have my latest contact telephone number?
- Have I told the school who else to call if they cannot contact me?



The Five Rights



1. Right People

Finding the right people to assist us with our work is the most important of the 5 Rights. Aboriginal

families can be socially and culturally complex. Developing a picture of significant family members with your students is a good place to start. Be aware that uncles, aunties, grandparents and other carers can be just as significant as the parents and may also need to be involved. At a Community level, you may need to liaise with local agencies such as the school or health clinic. Be aware that there is a high turnover of non-Indigenous staff in these organisations and in many cases a local Aboriginal person (Teacher Assistant or Aboriginal Health Worker) may have better long-term knowledge about your student.

2. Right Time

When organising Community contacts, or visits, it is crucial to ensure that you align with family and broader Community priorities. Funerals, ceremonies, employment and other Community business can often take priority.



3. Right Place

There are a few key considerations to ensuring right place. Is the location

suitable for the attendees? Is the relationship between them and the host venue manager OK? How will people get there? Do you need to facilitate transport? Are there toilets and tea/coffee facilities? Are you bringing catering or buying local? How will you get from the airport? Do you have a backup plan for communications if your transport is delayed? Will the host agency require payment for their assistance?



4. Right Language

Clear communication is critical to effective Community engagement. What is the main language of the group you

are meeting with? Do you need a translator? With ESL clients it is sometimes better to use visual or graphic based presentations and handouts that are written in plain language. Be aware that in any group there is likely to be varying degrees of comprehension. In many remote communities the incidence of hearing loss and visual impairment is more common. Allowing space in our communication for other participants to re-tell or translate our information is an important part of being understood.

As a general rule, when communicating with ESL clients speak clearly and check whenever possible that the message has been understood.

5. Right Way

When all this comes together --- That is RIGHT WAY --- When not sure about any of the rights go to number 1 --- Find the Right PEOPLE and ask them.



The "Five Rights" were developed from a Community Governance Training program in Maningrida NT and were presented at the Garma Forum in 2004 by Board and staff members of the then, Maningrida JET Centre.



Choosing Boarding

Choosing a suitable Boarding Provider for your child is not a task to be taken lightly. There are a number of important factors to consider. A large number of Boarding Providers are available across Australia and offer a range of different structures and experiences. There is also the question of distance from your Community to the location of the Boarding Provider.

Sending your child interstate to a capital city or large regional town, far away from home, can be quite daunting if the child has never been away from home before. It is even more difficult if the climate is different and the child has no family or friends at the school or living in the area. An all-boys or all-girls boarding program or a co-educational program are some of the options. Then there is the range of structures, from Family Group Homes to smaller hostels, or the larger dormitory style boarding facilities to choose from.

Boarding schools generally comprise a combination of student boarding accommodation and classrooms, together with recreation facilities, all on the one campus. Residential Colleges, on the other hand, are usually located in rural regional towns. They provide accommodation only and students attend a school of their choice. Many of the students who access these facilities do so in order to pursue a curriculum which is not available in their local school.

Agricultural Colleges, also located in rural towns, cater for students whose choice of schooling is in the field of agriculture. Education and accommodation are provided on the one campus.

Rural Student Hostels - Located in rural towns of varying size, these hostels provide accommodation only for students who live in areas too remote to have daily access to a secondary school. These hostels vary greatly in student numbers and range from a few small ones in extremely remote locations to larger ones in towns where a choice of schools may be available.

Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme (IYMP) accommodation: - IYMP is part of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (DPM&C). Career Employment Australia has operated the IYMP programme since 2006 in 14 locations across 6 States and Territories. IYMP offers accommodation and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tertiary students between the ages of 16-24. These boarding facilities, located in capital cities and large regional towns throughout Australia, are for students willing to relocate in pursuit of further education, training, apprenticeship and employment. IYMP addresses the barriers to training, employment and education and provides holistic support. Further details are available on the website: <http://iymp.com.au/>

Cross cultural awareness is important if you choose a boarding program where there are international overseas students as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous students sharing boarding, classroom and recreational facilities.



Enrolling your child

Once you have decided on which Boarding Provider you would like to enrol your child with, you must undergo the enrolment process. To enrol your child, you will need to get an enrolment form. The form can usually be found on a Boarding Provider's website or the form may be available at your local school or council office. Alternatively, you may contact the Boarding Provider and ask for one to be sent to your postal address.

When enrolling your child, it is best to make sure you have all the information required, which may include:

- Personal Information
- Parents, Guardians and other contacts - Parent/Guardian background
- Contact persons
- Family information (Aboriginal Name, Skin group, clan)
- Birth Certificate
- Previous school records (grades, merit certificates, school attendance records)
- Medical records
- Immunisation records
- Abstudy records
- Community contact information

If you are unsure as to how to fill out this information, it is best to ask for assistance, either locally, or by contacting the Boarding Provider directly.

Enrolment

When producing enrolment information, keep in mind some of the barriers Parents may face when trying to enrol their child. Difficulties may include:

- Language barriers
- Reading level (English is often a second or third language)
- Lack of communication resources (eg. Phone, email, fax, internet)
- Lack of information resources (eg. Abstudy information, immunisation and medical records)
- Lack of enrolment information (eg. Enrolment forms, resources to print or fill-out forms)

To assist Parents with the enrolment process, it is recommended that Community organisations such as Community schools, council offices or health clinics be involved in the enrolment process. Please keep in mind that these organisations often have limited resources, and have a range of other commitments and priorities. Often, they face many challenges themselves, due to isolation and limited resources. Best outcomes may be achieved by sending staff to the Community to interview parents and prospective students. Staff can assist with the completion of enrolment forms and check with local agencies and authorities to ensure the information and records are accurate.



Remote Indigenous Parents Association (RIPA)

The Remote Indigenous Parents Association (RIPA) was initiated by Boarding Australia as part of the 2013 PaCE Project and further developed in 2014/15. The purpose of RIPA is to provide a process for parents from remote Indigenous Communities to share their experiences, expectations, hopes and aspirations regarding the education of their children.

Indigenous parents from remote and isolated communities face a range of issues when they send their children away from their home communities to board in another place. Many students travel great distances and there is nearly always a significant social, physical and cultural difference between their home environment and Boarding Provider locations. It is often difficult for parents to communicate with the boarding residences and schools due to limited understanding and awareness of procedures and processes, as well as inadequate communication services and technology. The establishment of RIPA is proposed as a means of providing Indigenous parents with a forum to address their unique needs and issues.

The Australian Government has provided Boarding Australia with further funding through the Indigenous Strategic Advancement (IAS) programme administered by the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (DPM&C). This will help ensure the on-going success of achievements to-date. Boarding Australia has been working closely with the Northern Territory Department of Education (NT-DoE), in particular, the General Manager of the Indigenous Education Review Implementation. The Remote Indigenous Parents Association (RIPA) has now been established at a national level as well as the Roper Gulf Branch. Whilst RIPA has not been formally incorporated, there is a clear understanding from the launch on 29th May, 2015 at Parliament house in Darwin that the entity for both RIPA national and RIPA Roper Gulf now exist under the umbrella of the BA-PaCE and BA-IAS projects funded by the Australian Government. The national RIPA is very much in the embryonic stage and this will be shaped and developed over the next stage of the project. RIPA Roper Gulf is more advanced and this will become more 'grounded' and operational during the BA-IAS project. Additionally, BA will explore the feasibility of additional RIPA branches.

As part of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding, BA has undertaken to develop a model for Restorative Principles of Engagement (RPE) as a recommended culture for Communities, boarding service providers and other stakeholders to support students in the process of gaining an education. RPE is part of the Restorative Practice work promoted by Real Justice – Australia (RJA) under the umbrella of the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP). Tiwi College will be the exemplary model on the basis of their demonstrated commitment to RPE and collaboration with BA and RJA over the past four years.





Capacity building and self-determination within remote Indigenous Communities are seen as fundamental to supporting student education. Key elements of this PaCE project have real potential for further development, such as the Remote Indigenous Parents Association (RIPA), Restorative Practice Training, the application of Standards, and further research and development of Both Ways Education (BWE). This Guide will serve as a useful tool for Parents and Boarding Providers.

BA has extensive experience in the NT and has been involved in the development of national standards; nationally accredited training; conferences & workshops; staff recruitment, induction and mentoring.

BA will be working closely with NT-DoE in supporting the roll-out of the Indigenous Education Review recommendations and BA project staff will be co-located with the Transition team and Abstudy in Darwin. BA will continue to be supported by the Northern Territory branch of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA-NT) have agreed to assist with setting up RIPA. A number of organisations have agreed to be part of an advisory group to provide ongoing assistance and advice.

Become a Member of RIPA

If you would like to become a member of RIPA or find out more about the proposed Association, please contact Boarding Australia (see Contacts section of this Guide).

Assisting RIPA

RIPA will provide a unique opportunity for improving communication between remote Indigenous parents and Boarding Providers. It will give parents from remote Indigenous Communities a collective 'voice' and an opportunity to share and learn ways to better support their children's education.

If you would like to find out more about the proposed Association, please contact Boarding Australia (see Contacts section of this Guide).



Contacts

Boarding Australia

Website: www.boardingaustralia.edu.au

Phone: 08 8945 6049

Mobile: 0428 864 537

Fax: 08 8918 8009

Email: admin@boardingaustralia.edu.au

Postal Address: PO Box, 8103 Grange SA 5022

Remote Indigenous Parents Association (RIPA)

Website: www.ripa.org.au

Abstudy

Website: <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/abstudy>

Phone: 1800 132 31





NT Boarding Providers

AHL Fordimail

Website: www.ahl.gov.au and follow the links

Phone: 08 8971 1404

Fax: 08 8971 1524

Email: Contact via AHL website

Postal Address: Lot 2041 Zimin Drive, Cossak, Katherine, 0850, NT

AHL Tennant Creek

Website: www.ahl.gov.au and follow the links

Phone: 08 8962 2511

Email: Contact via AHL website

Postal Address: 782 Paterson St, Tennant Creek NT 0860

AHL Wadeye

Website: www.ahl.gov.au and follow the links

Phone: 08 8978 1210

Email: Contact via AHL website

Callistemon House

Website: callistemon.org.au

Phone: 08 8972 3212

Fax: 08 8972 3233

Email: callistemon@westnet.com.au

Postal Address: PO Box 1971, Katherine NT 0850

Djidbidjidbi Residential College

Website: www.mirarr.net/djidbidjidbi-residential-college

Phone: 08 8979 9508

Email:

Postal Address: PO Box 269, Jabiru 0886

Kormilda College

Website: www.kormilda.nt.edu.au

Phone: 08 8922 1611

Fax: 08 8947 0792

Email: admin@kormilda.nt.edu.au

Postal Address: PO Box 241, Berrimah NT 0828



Marrara Christian College

Website: www.mcc.nt.edu.au

Phone: 08 8920 2000

Fax: 08 8920 2001

Email: admin.mcc@ntschoools.net

Postal Address: PO Box 84 Karama NT 0813

St John's Catholic College

Website: www.stjohnsnt.catholic.edu.au

Phone: 08 8982 2222

Fax: 08 8982 2204

Email: admin.stjohns@nt.catholic.edu.au

Postal Address: 54 Salonika Street, The Gardens
NT 0820

St Philip's College

Website: www.stphilips.nt.edu.au

Phone: 08 8950 4511

Fax: 08 8950 4522

Email: info@stphilips.nt.edu.au

Postal Address: PO Box 33, Alice Springs NT 0871

Woolanng Homeland Christian College

Website: www.whcc.nt.edu.au

Phone: 08 8978 1000

Fax: 08 8978 2985

Email: principal.whcc@ntschoools.net

Postal Address: PO Box 173 Batchelor NT 0845

Yirara College

Website: yirara.nt.edu.au/

Phone: 08 8950 5644

Fax: 08 8950 5666

Email: info@yirara.nt.edu.au

Postal Address: 470 Stuart Highway, Alice Springs
NT 0870



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