

# On Country Learning experiences

On Country Learning (OCL) is a pedagogical approach that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to connect more deeply to their culture through hands-on learning experiences. OCL is a strength-based practice that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the opportunity to succeed, which has significant benefits for students' social and emotional health, including increased confidence and self-identity. OCL fosters a culturally inclusive environment and moves away from the silos of Western Education. Jackson-Barrett and Lee-Hammond (2018) found

**“Nurturing children’s cultural identity and wellbeing enabled participating children to have their identities valued and celebrated in their education”(p.96).**

Not only are there social and emotional benefits, OCL experiences have reportedly contributed to improved attendance and educational outcomes of Aboriginal students. OCL can also be implemented with non-Aboriginal students to increase their understanding of Aboriginal culture and history.

OCL experiences can fit into various areas of the curriculum and relates directly to the Cross-Curriculum-Priority ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures’. Some OCL ideas to get you started:

1. Invite local Elders or community groups into the school to share knowledge on the following:
  - Bush tucker foods and their characteristics
  - Bush medicine and how it works
  - Traditional recipes and cooking
  - Learning about the land and waterways
2. Learn local Aboriginal language for plants, insects and animals and take the students on a nature walk to find plants and insects
3. Learn about and visit local Aboriginal significant sites
4. Organise regular outdoor yarning circles

**Most importantly, speak to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or organisations for their assistance in developing the OCL program to ensure your OCL activities are relevant to your local context.**