

Identifying English as an Additional Dialect (EAD) Learners: Advice for teachers of students who use Aboriginal English as their main home dialect.

Context

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students who use traditional languages or Creoles as their first language and require support to learn Standard Australian English (SAE) are described as English as an additional language (EAL) learners. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students who use a dialect of English (often called Aboriginal English) as their main home dialect and require support to learn Standard Australian English are described as English as an additional dialect (EAD) learners.

Learning a second or additional language is not the same as learning an additional dialect of the same language. Schools need to be sensitive to the learning needs of EAD learners as there can be confusion about the differences between dialects. Students in NSW public schools learn to use SAE for school learning. SAE is the dialect of English that is used for formal schooling.

“Aboriginal English is the name given to dialects spoken by many Aboriginal people... Aboriginal English varies from other dialects of English by distinct linguistic features and cultural usages.”
(Capability Framework: Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners, 2013)

Many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in NSW Public schools use Aboriginal English as their main home dialect. Aboriginal English is a distinct dialect of English that is used by families and students in their local communities. Some students may use Aboriginal English as their main home dialect (Dialect 1: D1) and many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students will use SAE.

Some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students who come to school using a dialect of English may not be proficient in SAE for school learning. Communities often call this way of using English, ‘School English.’

Aboriginal English has developed since colonisation and has become a major dialect of English that is used throughout Australia today. As teachers, we should not assume that people (including students and their families) will have any explicit knowledge about their way of using English or that people will have any awareness that they may be using a different kind of English to SAE. We also need to ensure that we don't assume that students and their families will have a name for the way they speak. For many people it will just be 'English'. Not all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students will be EAD learners. Many students will use SAE proficiently and will not require any additional support.

The importance of the relationship between language and identity

It is vital that, as educators, we value and support the maintenance of the home dialects that students bring to school because language and identity are closely linked and a criticism of one can be interpreted as a criticism of the other. Students need to be supported to acquire SAE but not at the expense of losing or impacting on their cultural identity.

Some students will be learning SAE as an additional dialect (D2). These students are EAD learners and not EAL learners as their main home language is still recognisably English.

Questions to consider

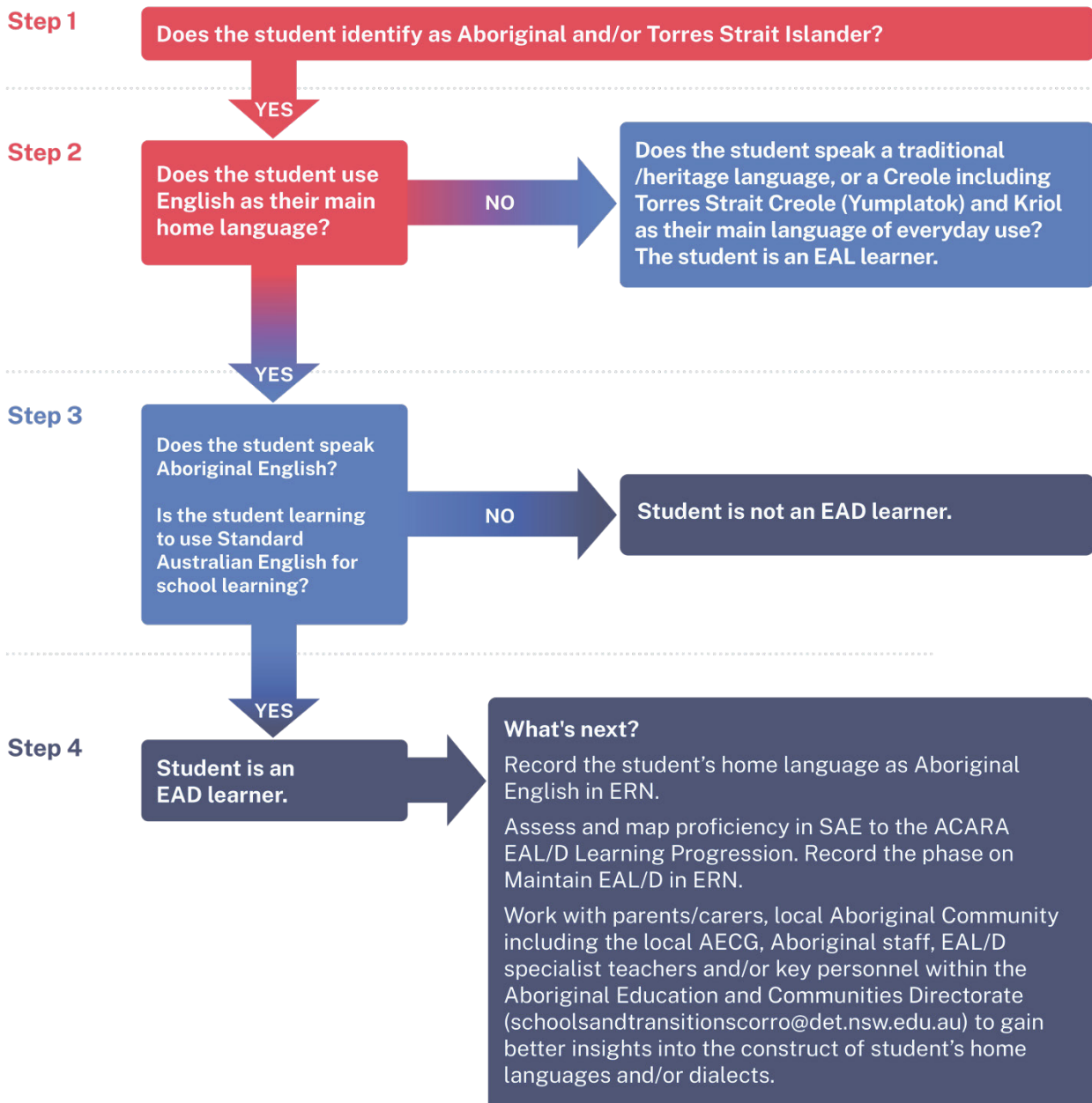
- Does the student identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?
- Does the student/family identify or connect with a particular Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language group?
- Does the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student in your class use a different kind of English?
- How does your student describe the English spoken at home and the English spoken at school? Does your student understand what SAE is? Are they aware of the differences?
- Does your student speak a traditional Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language (including Creoles) other than English as their main language of everyday use? These students are most likely to be EAL learners and are entitled to the same level of support as other EAL learners.
- Does the student require additional support to acquire SAE for school learning?

EAL/D Identification flowcharts

These flowcharts have been adapted from the EAL/D Hub online learning resource. Schools and teachers can use them to better identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander EAD and EAL learners in NSW public schools.

**Please note the resources are part of the larger EAL/D Hub and are not department owned documents. They are presented here to provide additional advice and information for teachers and schools.*

Identifying Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students as additional dialect learners.



English as an additional dialect (EAD) – second dialect acquisition pointers

Teachers can use the following pointers to assess students' proficiency in learning SAE. The pointers are intended as a guide only and the list is not exhaustive. The pointers highlight the behaviours, language learning characteristics and strategies that EAL/D learners may demonstrate as they learn to use SAE at school. Teachers can also devise their own pointers.

Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Consolidating
<p>Student is new to learning SAE and is beginning to become aware that Aboriginal English is different from SAE.</p>	<p>Student has an emerging awareness that Aboriginal English is a different English to SAE and is exploring the differences between them.</p>	<p>Student understands the differences between Aboriginal English and SAE and can code-switch between them effectively in most social and learning contexts.</p>	<p>Student has near bilingual/bidialectal competence and code-switches automatically between SAE and the home language in a wide range of social and learning contexts.</p>
<p>May not learn and use SAE just by being exposed to it. Student needs to develop awareness of dialect similarities and differences to be able to code-switch effectively from one dialect to another.</p>	<p>Becomes aware of different basic SAE registers, appropriate listening behaviours and expectations in SAE contexts, along with the use of code-switching.</p>	<p>Requires ongoing support to understand the differences at all levels of language in SAE and Aboriginal English.</p>	<p>Benefits from explicit teaching of SAE structures and conventions.</p>
		<p>Continues to rely on a well-structured, supportive language-</p>	<p>Benefits from using the home language to ensure the continuing language/concept</p>

Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Consolidating
		learning environment.	development and communication of personal experiences or ideas.
	Requires support and time to develop academic language and use of formal registers.	Has an understanding of colloquialisms and idioms.	Has a well-developed understanding of colloquialisms and idioms in both SAE and home language but may still find academic language and concepts challenging
May have experienced difficulties with schooling in the past.		Is increasingly aware of differences in cultural expectations and behaviours.	
May find the demands of the classroom, school or teacher different from those of their family/cultural life.	Needs the home language to be acknowledged and respected to help develop code-switching, and bilingualism/ bidialectism.	Continues to need support with the development of more specialised and formal academic language.	
May have had very limited exposure to literacy in the home/community.	Will benefit from using the home language during learning tasks as part of an inclusive two-way learning program.	Continues to rely on the language structures and cultural understandings of the home language to make meaning of	

Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Consolidating
		SAE.	
<p>May be learning vocabulary, sounds and concepts different from the home language competent communication skills. This may prevent students from recognising the need to learn the different conventions of SAE.</p>	<p>Benefits from hands-on, experiential learning to reinforce new technical vocabulary and SAE concepts.</p>	<p>Needs to maintain the home language to gain greater understanding and control over code-switching.</p>	<p>Highly competent communication skills in Aboriginal English may prevent students from recognising the need to learn the different conventions of SAE.</p>

*Adapted from WA Department of Education.

Supporting EAD learners

- How does your school raise awareness that some of your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students may be EAD learners?
- How does your school value the cultural and linguistic resources EAD learners bring to the classroom?
- How does your school maintain home dialects while at the same time developing proficiency in SAE?
- Do teachers understand register and the mode continuum and how this concept can help EAD students develop proficiency in SAE? Aboriginal English is an informal spoken dialect that can vary from formal written English in many ways.

Want to learn more?

- [Deadly Dialects](#)
- [Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners \(The EALD Hub\)](#)
- [Aboriginal Ways of Using English](#)

- [What is a dialect?](#)
- [Capability Framework: Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners](#)

References and further reading

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- [Capability Framework, Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners](#)
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- Department of Education, Western Australia [Tracks to Two Way Learning](#).