



# Professional Practice

## Standard 4 – Environment

### Significant Episode: Accelerating Indigenous learners

**Maths Teacher**  
Toolooa State High School  
Gladstone Cluster

#### *Finding 4.2: Expectations*

*Hold and convey high expectations of Indigenous learners and of yourself as a teacher of Indigenous learners.*

#### **Student A and Student B**

##### **Background**

We have an accelerated mathematics program and two Indigenous boys were part of the program. We wondered about the effectiveness of 'pushing' and 'challenging' these students - will they rise to meet expectations and be successful, or lose motivation and give up?

Student A came to high school as a 'C' student in mathematics at the end of year 7 and a (Band) 9 in the NAPLAN test whereas Student B came across as an 'A' student in maths and an (Band) 8 in NAPLAN numeracy. Student A had parent support and was particularly successful in assignments and always completed homework, whereas Student B seemed to have less parental support, did not have access to a computer at home and sometimes did not submit his assignments.

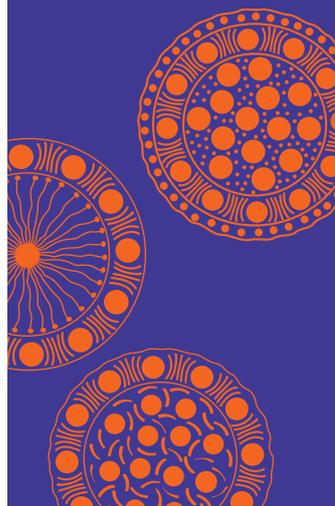
##### **What happened?**

Both boys were put into the extension maths class in year 8 where they were exposed to higher order thinking and higher end mathematical concepts. Both boys were successful in the extension class during class time – participated, had good ideas, etc. Student A ended up on an 'A' at the end of year 8, whereas, Student B ended up on a 'B' and this was partially due to management skills related to work competition. However, Student B was part of Toolooa SHS's successful Year 8 team that won the Gladstone round of the annual QAMT Mathematics Tournament. He and the other 2 members of the team then travelled to Bundaberg to participate in the next round. Teachers and organisers from other schools specifically commented on Student B's mathematical awareness and engagement, and how he stood out in his team.

In Year 9, both boys were invited to be part of a mathematics acceleration program where they covered the Year 10 curriculum (as well as their regular Year 9 curriculum) in place of an elective subject, in order to be fast tracked into year 11 Maths B in 2013. They were two of only ten students identified as being capable of achieving in such a program.

Both of the boys are progressing well in the accelerated program, and the main barrier to their learning is time management related to completing work outside of class time. Each boy has had individual conversations with their teacher and both admitted that whilst they could have and should have worked harder in the first semester of the program, they have both given a commitment to achieve a higher standard this semester as both still wish to bypass Year 10 Mathematics and move straight to the Year 11 subject in 2013.

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## Results

Results showed that Student B has remained consistent but will need continued support and encouragement to maintain A/B marks. We have seen excellent progress by Student A. He continues to make excellent grades and this can be attributed to his positive relationship with his Maths teacher and the high expectations that she has of him.

## Reflection

When pushed to step up to the next level of maths, both of these Indigenous boys rose to the challenge. Perhaps if they were not pushed, they may have become complacent and only complete what was asked of them. However, having high expectations of these students has seen them achieve well and fulfil their potential.

## Some questions to prompt discussion:

1. *How do you convey high expectations in mathematics to Indigenous learners?*
2. *Why is it important to have high expectations of yourself as well as high expectations of Indigenous learners?*
3. *What other interesting or important aspects are in this Significant Episode?*

