Reconciliation in action at Mosman Park PS

By Matthew Stewart
Mosman Park Primary School

In recent years, Mosman Park Primary School has been focused on upskilling staff on Indigenous culture and on further developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

In 2021, the hard work of staff was acknowledged by being one of only three schools nationally to be announced as finalists in the 2021 biennial Narragunnawali Awards, which celebrate schools that are doing amazing work in fostering a greater knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions. Finalists are acknowledged for strengthening relationships, building respect and providing meaningful opportunities in the classroom, around the school or service and with the community.

The school also was a finalist for the SSTUWA's 2021 Reconciliation in Action (RIA) Award.

Mosman Park Primary School's journey began in 2018, when staff realised that they were only really engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families over NAIDOC Week.

The school wanted to include Indigenous voices and views around school activities more, so the families were invited to a series of morning teas to gain insights into how the school could enhance understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and improve the school experience for their children.

One of the outcomes of this was the creation of a homework club to support the connection between home and school.

The parents of these students were also invited to drop in, have a coffee and use the computers, too.

Each term, Mosman Park PS holds barbecues and winter warmer events so that families can play with their children using the school's resources and get to know each other and staff over a light meal. This has been a much- anticipated highlight.

Mosman Park PS learning support coordinator Amanda Fraser has been a key mover in the homework club and has organised for students to have meaningful work to do with a volunteer each week. She has also supported the students and staff during the social events.

Colleagues Denise Barnett and Kerrie Lynch have been regular volunteers at the homework club and have supported the younger students, engaging with their families, too.

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework have enabled the school to be more inclusive; a place which has a much greater awareness of the full history and the culture of our area.

All Mosman Park PS students are now engaged with, and excited by, their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories (this year's NAIDOC Week celebration was the biggest and best yet) and their parents are also wanting in on the action.

Even the kindy students, under the expert tutelage of Denise and Kerrie, are able to learn and regularly use Noongar language through song, stories and greetings.

The students even created their own Acknowledgement of Country.

At Mosman Park PS the RAP vision has since translated into a new school motto and logo: "Championing the Skills to Listen, Learn and Lead".

Even the Stirling sporting house now bears the name of a Noongar activist, Fanny Balbuk, and there is an Elder on the school board – retired Noongar educator, Freda Ogilvie.

Importantly, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have told the staff that they now have a greater sense of connection to the school and feel that they have a safe environment for their children to grow as learners.

Mosman Park PS teachers and SSTUWA members Kerrie Lynch, Amanda Fraser and Denise Barnett were nominated for the union’s 2021 RIA Award by colleague Matthew Stewart, who is also the school branch union representative. For more information about the 2022 RIA Award visit sstuwa.org.au/atsi Nominations open 1 September.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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