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TEACHER ATTITUDES

Teachers are in a very influential position. Their attitudes, conscious or otherwise, are picked up on, and often internalised by their students. Negative attitudes directed at particular students are consequently understood by those students and their peers. This commonly results in the particular student or students being marginalised and alienated from and by their classmates, and from an effective learning process.

Misunderstanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures often underlies the negative attitudes that some teachers unknowingly transmit to their students. Malin's (1990) article (reprinted in this issue in the section on Student Perspectives), highlights the way that teachers are often unaware of their own prejudices, and how these are unconsciously transmitted in the classroom.

To effectively work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children and their families, a person must shift their comfort zone to be able to interact within an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultural zone. This involves making a conscious effort to recognise one's own prejudices and to seek to overcome these, with knowledge about the people and the communities with which a teacher is working.

