

Life Without Barriers Education Foundation

Life Without Barriers Education acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs and to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We believe that reconciliation must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians. We are committed to an ongoing journey towards truth telling and reconciliation. We recognise and value the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, employees, parents and carers, and the communities in which we work across Australia as we continue our reconciliation journey together.

Life Without Barriers Education background

Life Without Barriers Education (registered as Special Assistance Schools) is an essential part of the education system, providing opportunities for children and young people who benefit from adaptable and personalised educational approaches. The schools work collaboratively with families and community engaging and partnering to benefit both young people and local communities.

The young people who attend Life Without Barriers Education have typically been disenfranchised by systemic barriers. They may have experienced one or more significant and complex educational, social, developmental, psychological, health, legal or family situations which demand unique responses. These responses are embedded within an education framework and involve learning, wellbeing, mental health, community, medical, multidisciplinary, disability, legal and/or social support network systems.

The schools offer educational pathways for young people in years 7-12 who are looking for an alternative to mainstream education. Using individualised and strength-based approaches, the schools work with young people to engage in:

- Building academic skills
- Accredited learning pathways
- Social and emotional wellbeing
- Strong cultural ways of knowing, being and doing
- Future learning and employment pathways
- Connections with community and social purpose

Life Without Barriers Education consists of small schools with flexible timetabling, smaller learning groups, strong staff/young people relationships, and an emphasis on young person voice and agency, community engagement, and relevant curriculum. This supports the delivery of creative teaching responses to (re-)engage young people in learning. Flexible learning choices are offered and characterised by:

- Every Individual supported
- Culturally responsive learning
- All belong to a learning community
- Learning that is critically reflective
- Promoting a culture of success

Life Without Barriers Education is for young people of high school age looking for a different way of doing school.

Life Without Barriers Education Philosophy

Education is a human right and provides pathways to positive and equitable futures.

Life Without Barriers Education aligns with The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2019) as follows:

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Goal 2: All young Australians become:

- confident and creative individuals
- successful lifelong learners
- active and informed members of the community

Life Without Barriers Education ensures that young people have equal access to educational opportunities by removing systemic barriers to education and providing the necessary resources and support for holistic learning success. Young people are at the centre of their learning journey, seeing themselves as learners and developing agencies, skills, and talents for future pathways. Relationships held in an atmosphere of trust are key in Life Without Barriers Education.

Vision

Thriving, flexible, culturally responsive, inclusive, fun schools that are hubs of community connection and learning.

Purpose

Hearing the voices of young people in all we do creates purpose for the school community. The school community responds by providing a quality, flexible, young person-centred education that celebrates every individual, fostering a sense of belonging, and providing the necessary resources for future pathways and success.

Values

Life Without Barriers Education values are the foundation of everything we do and help shape a positive school culture and environment where everyone feels safe and valued.

Relationships: Relationships are at the heart of the teaching and learning experience and we respect, support, and build strong, positive connections between young people, staff, and the community.

Respect: We value diversity and individuality, creating a culture of respect where everyone is treated with kindness and unconditional positive regard. It is a privilege

to journey with young people who choose the Life Without Barriers Education community.

Responsive: We partner with families and community to find solutions. We are adaptable and attentive to the needs of young people and ensure young people's voice in their decisions.

Imagination: We embrace imagination in education, valuing student creativity and exploration as pathways to personal, more meaningful learning.

Courage: We have the courage to take risks and step out of our comfort zones walking alongside young people, to face challenges with confidence and resilience. We are a school community with a high expectations culture where young people are change leaders.

Reconciliation

Life Without Barriers Education are committed to taking meaningful action to advance reconciliation by working with Reconciliation Australia to implement Reconciliation Action Plans. Life Without Barriers Education schools embed the Narragunnawali (Reconciliation in Education) RAP framework, driving reconciliation in education by building relationships, respect, and opportunities in the classroom, around the school and with the community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and ways of knowing, being and doing will be woven through all aspects of the schools' culture, learning, relationships, and governance.

Teaching and learning model

The Life Without Barriers Education teaching and learning model assists principals, school leaders, teachers, young people, and parents/carers to work together in strong, safe, and effective learning communities that create and sustain better outcomes for young people. The Life Without Barriers Education teaching and learning model consists of the following components:

1. Life Without Barriers Education vision

2. Life Without Barriers Education pedagogy

2.1 Learning Theory Model – Zone of Proximal Development

2.2 Common Ground Practice Model

2.2.1 CARE

2.2.2 WOW

2.3 Education Practice Model

- Teaching and Learning
- Wellbeing and Young Person Voice: From Belonging to Action
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Leading: Improvement, Innovation and Change

3. Building Practice Excellence

Each component articulates how teaching and learning is shaped, and how education is experienced by young people and delivered by educators.

1. Vision

Thriving, flexible, culturally responsive, inclusive, fun schools that are hubs of community connection and learning.

The Life Without Barriers Education Vision is a forward-looking declaration that captures long-term goals and ideals for schools under its care. It communicates a shared ambition for what kind of learning environments, outcomes and impact the schools aim to achieve, supported and enabled by the governing structure.

2. Pedagogy

Life Without Barriers Education pedagogy moves away from Eurocentrism and embraces a relational and culturally responsive approach, one that “actively value, and mobilise as resources, the cultural repertoires and intelligences that young people bring to the learning relationship” (University of South Australia, 2024). It is a goal-oriented framework, and its success depends on the context, the educator’s awareness, and the adaptability of the teaching practices.

Cultures are dynamic, multifaceted, and diverse. What is culturally responsive for one group of learners, or one context may not be appropriate for another. Cultures evolve over time, and individuals within a cultural group have varied experiences and identities. We constantly learn, adapt, and reflect to remain responsive to the evolving cultural needs of students.

We respect the self-determination and sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, focus on fostering meaningful relationships, embed culturally relevant practices, and create safe, inclusive spaces that honour their identities and aspirations. By doing so, we support young people in achieving improved learning outcomes while affirming their cultural strengths and knowledge systems.

The Life Without Barriers Education Pedagogy is grounded in three integrated models:

2.1 Learning Theory Model – Zone of Proximal Development

2.2 Common Ground Practice Model

2.2.1 CARE Practice

2.2.2 WOW Practice

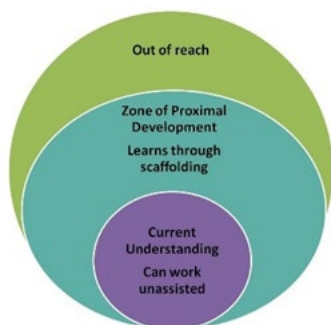
2.3 Education Practice Model

- Teaching and Learning
- Wellbeing and Young Person Voice: From Belonging to Action
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Leading: Improvement, Innovation and Change

Together they create a holistic approach to sustaining strong and safe school communities, to improve student engagement, participation, belonging, motivation, and achievement.

2.1 Learning theory model

Zone of Proximal Development

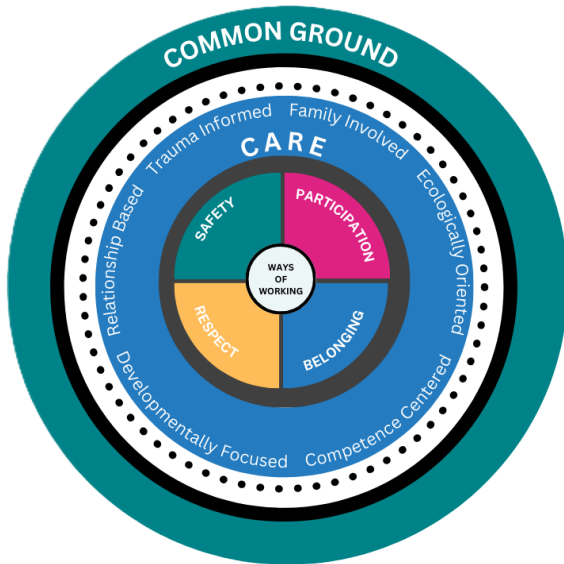


We teach and learn within the zone of proximal development - the space in which young people learn, practice, and achieve. We scaffold within the zone of proximal development to support student success and minimize unnecessary struggles, allowing young people to use their prior knowledge while receiving guidance and practice opportunities to construct new knowledge.

The scaffolded zone of proximal development learning engages learners more deeply and safely in learning, catering for young people’s diversity.

2.2 Common Ground Practice Model

Life Without Barriers Education embeds the values in daily practice through a whole school approach known as Common Ground. Common Ground describes the ways we are together in our school communities and is lived through two key practice models: CARE and Ways of Working (WoW).



Infographic Key: The Common Ground Practice model represents a holistic, interconnected approach to practice, with no hierarchy.

At the core, the Ways of Working model supports transformational relationships. Surrounding this, the CARE model establishes trauma-informed conditions for change. The dotted layer represents the individual members of the school community, highlighting connection and collaboration. Encircling everything, Common Ground reflects the shared values and collective purpose that unify and guide the community.

Common Ground Practice Model Elements

2.2.1 CARE – Creating conditions for change

CARE is an evidence-based, trauma-informed practice framework that guides staff interactions and professional practice in the school. CARE is sustained by embedding it in the school culture, and data is used to inform practice and maintain congruency in applying the principles of CARE.

CARE creates the conditions for positive change in young people’s lives, focusing on relationships to help young people build new competencies and guides our practice and interactions with young people.

CARE runs concurrently with the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention program for Schools (TCI-S). The ability of the school to respond effectively to staff and young people in crisis situations is critical in establishing not only a safe environment but one that also fosters positive relationships and promotes growth and development.

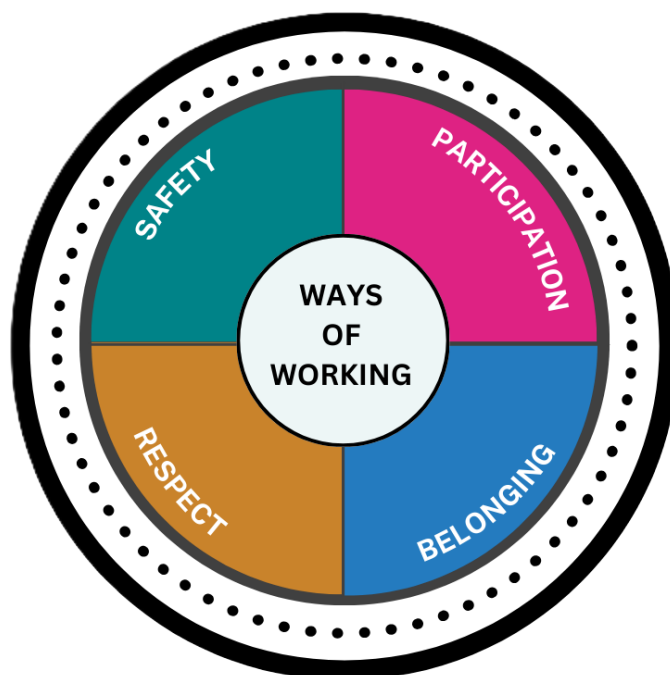
The six evidence informed principles form the foundation of CARE. By being intentional in daily interactions with young people, the CARE principles collectively guide the thinking and working together in the best interests of the young person and family. CARE informs staff professional practice knowledge strengthening ways of working on common ground.



2.2.2 Ways of working practice (WoW)

Ways of Working on Common Ground are at the heart of the school's culture. It reflects our commitment to working together in a way that promotes shared responsibility and collaborative decision making in the interests of group cohesion and wellbeing. The four Ways of Working; Respect, Safety, Participation and Belonging, are used to guide relationships, interactions, and decisions within the school community. They ensure and build young people's voice and agency.

- **Respect** is respect for self, others, and the environment.
- **Safety** is how we create physical and emotional safety.
- **Participation** is about having a go and the right to negotiate how we participate.
- **Belonging** is about fostering a place for everyone.



The four Ways of Working form the boundaries through which the community negotiates their learning and social spaces and are reflected in working agreements. These Ways of Working are negotiated in conversations between young people and adults. How they are described and used is dependent on the activity and situation. Through this practice, power is re-distributed and young people, families, community, and staff are equally responsible for their actions and contributions to the school community. This practice is fundamental to building school communities that are safe, predictable, and sustainable.

The school community uses strategies to manage and negotiate individual and group boundaries and expectations including:

- working agreements
- restorative problem solving
- circling up to connect as a group, talk through and resolve any issues, celebrate successes and be present to each other.

Respecting common ground's connectedness to first nation knowledges

“Aboriginal culture acknowledges the importance of human relationships but also tells us that our responsibilities are far broader than to each other. We must also build relationships with our place and all things in our place.”

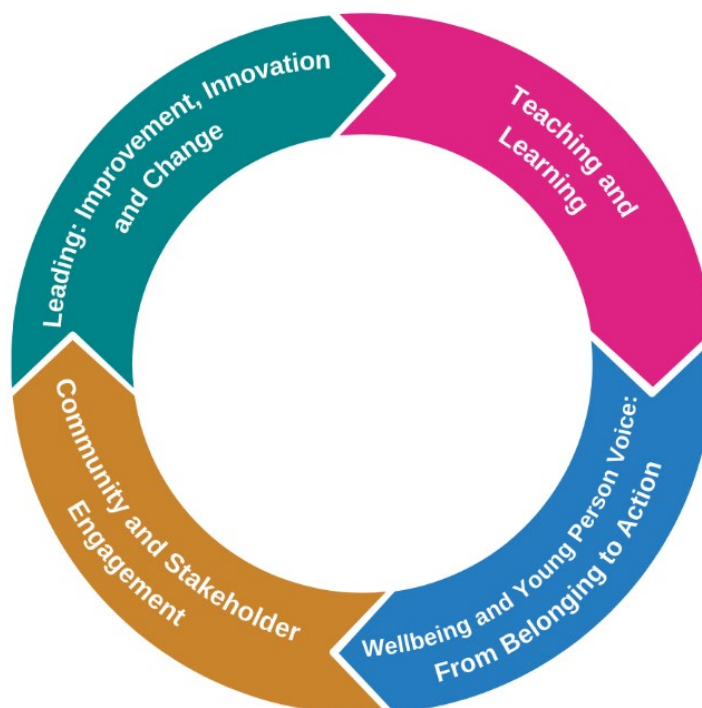
Callaghan & Gordon (2022). The Dreaming Path. Pantera Press

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been living on common ground for many generations, across thousands of years and between clan and nation groups. Evidence of this can be found in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing and is communicated through storytelling, song, dance, and art.

The circle holds deep significance in cultural practices, symbolising connection, unity, and the cyclical nature of life. In traditional meetings and ceremonies, the arrangement of people in a circle emphasises equality, with no hierarchy and everyone on the same level (common ground). This circle arrangement reflects the importance of community, inclusivity, and shared responsibility. In some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' circles formed in the earth were referred to as BOUL (stone circles) or Bora Rings. These arrangements are linked to the social and cultural context of each tribe. In modern Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practices, this coming together in circles may be referred to as Yarning Circles.

2.3 Education practice model

The Life Without Barriers Education practice model is outlined within four interrelated domains.



Domain 1: Teaching and learning

Intentional teaching and learning strategies are implemented across the schools to achieve clearly defined goals that prioritise the engagement, wellbeing, and academic progress of all young people. These strategies are grounded in inclusive, high-impact practices and are designed to respond to the diverse and often complex needs of young people. A whole-network approach ensures consistency, responsiveness, and alignment between curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and reporting. Through a focus on differentiated support, cultural responsiveness, and data-informed practice, teaching and learning environments are structured to promote safety, belonging, and meaningful participation. This approach ensures that all young people — regardless of background or prior experience — have access to learning that is relevant, challenging, and empowering.

Key quality teaching and learning practices that create inclusive and supportive learning environments include:

Life Without Barriers Education curriculum framework

The school's curriculum is guided by the relevant state or territory education authority, which oversees curriculum frameworks, assessment, and reporting. In Years 7–10, the school delivers the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 across selected Key Learning Areas, as required by each jurisdiction. Developed by the

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the Australian Curriculum provides a national framework from Foundation to Year 12, which each state or territory adapts to reflect local needs and priorities.

For students beyond Year 10, the curriculum includes approved pathways such as Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Culturally responsive teaching and learning

First Nations perspectives are embedded across the curriculum to ensure teaching and learning is culturally responsive, locally relevant, and grounded in respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and knowledge systems. This approach is informed by frameworks that support authentic engagement with local communities and promote relational, place-connected, and narrative-driven pedagogies. These perspectives are not added on but are woven through the curriculum meaningfully to support identity, connection, and learning for all young people.

- Australian Curriculum V9: Cross-Curriculum Priority, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. This priority aims to deepen an appreciation of the rich history, cultures, and ongoing significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It emphasises the importance of understanding their connection to Country/Place, cultural practices, and the impact of colonisation.
- The FIRST Framework (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2024) informs and supports our engagement with local First Nations communities, so that the teaching and learning program is suited to local contexts, cultural identities, future aspirations and is engaging for young people, while aligning with a relational and culturally responsive pedagogy.



Source: First Framework, ACARA

- 8-Ways of Aboriginal Learning: Aboriginal Pedagogy Framework is expressed as eight interconnected pedagogies involving narrative-driven learning, visualised learning processes, hands-on/reflective techniques, use of symbols/metaphors, land-based learning, indirect/synergistic logic, modelled/scaffolded genre mastery, and connectedness to community. But these can change in different settings.

8 Ways Aboriginal pedagogy framework							
Story Sharing:	Learning Maps:	Non-verbal:	Symbols and Images:	Land Links:	Non-linear:	Deconstruct/Reconstruct:	Community Links:
Approaching learning through narrative.	Explicitly mapping/visualising processes.	Applying intra-personal and kinaesthetic skills to thinking and learning.	Using images and metaphors to understand concepts and content.	Place-based learning, linking content to local land and place.	Producing innovations and understanding by thinking laterally or combining systems.	Modelling and scaffolding, working from wholes to parts (watch then do).	Centring local viewpoints, applying learning for community benefit.



(8ways.online)

Curriculum Delivery and Practice Framework

Life Without Barriers Education implements a consistent, network-wide approach to curriculum delivery, ensuring clear expectations and ongoing monitoring of learning outcomes. Systematic planning, moderation, and quality assurance processes support staff in delivering the curriculum with fidelity and clarity. This includes the following;

Curriculum and Assessment Planning Review Process

Life Without Barriers Education aims to ensure consistent, high-quality teaching that meets diverse learning needs. This is achieved through an approach that fosters a culture of continuous improvement, sets high expectations, monitors progress through school-wide data analysis, and supports every student's achievement. Key practice and strategies include:

- Planning considerations
- Operationalisation of intended curriculum

- Evidence based teaching and learning strategies
- Quality assurance and moderation of student learning

Quality assurance and moderation process

Life Without Barriers Education has a whole network approach to moderation called *Communities of Practice* (COPs). COPs provide an opportunity for teaching teams to collaborate and engage in professional dialogue to support the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. COPs also ensure validity, accuracy, and comparability of teacher judgement in relation to outcomes and provide opportunities to review and refine quality teaching and learning practices. Communities of Practice are scheduled on a regular basis, with timing aligned to key stages of the teaching cycle:

- Preparation – before teaching
- Consensus – during teaching
- Reflection and review – after teaching

Inclusive education and learning support model

Life Without Barriers Education has a whole network approach to inclusive education and learning support, this approach directs support to various levels of need. Staff are upskilled through COPs and identified professional development to better understand the needs of a young person and recognise appropriate reasonable adjustments. Collaboration with external agencies and other specialists is also encouraged.

Key practice and strategies include:

- NCCD
- Flexible Scheduling
- Individual Learning Plans
- Cultural Support Plans

Domain 2: Wellbeing and young person voice: from belonging to action

As young people develop a sense of belonging within the learning community, they pay attention to and act on their learning. A school culture of unconditional positive regard means every young person feels valued, connected, and empowered. Through a holistic and inclusive approach, we foster high expectations, and ensure equitable opportunities for cultural safety, expression and dignity, personal growth (including mental and physical wellness), lifelong learning, and meaningful participation in society.

Key practice and strategies include:

Therapeutic practice models CARE and ways of working on common ground

- Relational pedagogy
- Trauma-informed practice
- Developmental and Competency centred
- Family Involved and Ecology
- Collaborative problem solving and restorative practice
- Working Agreements

Wellbeing programs and support

- In class youth worker support
- Mental health programs and support
- Social-Emotional Learning

Culturally responsive practice

- Belonging and identity
- Culturally safe support systems
- Inclusive programs and instruction
- Family and community partnerships

Support for regular attendance

- Transport assistance
- Meals
- Targeted Resources

Personalised plans

- Individual Learning Plans
- Cultural Plans
- Transition Plans

Domain 3: Community and stakeholder engagement

We recognise a profound responsibility to the broader communities we serve and strive to contribute to their growth and cohesion. We are committed to actively engaging with local communities, ensuring that education is not only a service but a shared endeavour that reflects and respects the unique identity of each community. Education is a collaborative effort that brings together young people, families, educators, and the community. Well-established community and stakeholder engagement ensures shared responsibility and responsiveness to the education and future pathways for young people. Community collaboration provides a platform to collectively address challenges, ensure alignment to community needs, celebrate achievements, and improve the learning and wellbeing of young people. Together,

we build resilient, thriving communities where education serves as a cornerstone for shared success and well-being.

Key practice and strategies include:

Local advisory groups, stakeholders and connections

- Parents, Carers and Family
- Elders and Traditional Owners
- Community cultural organisations and leaders
- Local businesses and organisations
- Local schools
- Pathway providers
- Community services

School local advisory group government and education authorities

- National
- State

Life Without Barriers national advisory group

- Cultural Governance Group

Young people advocacy groups

- Establish inclusive advocacy structures
- Capacity building and empowerment
- Authentic engagement and co-design
- Visibility and communication

Domain 4: Leading: Improvement, innovation and change

School leaders ensure the integrity and interconnectedness of each domain. They support an inclusive culture, promote continuous professional learning and collaboration among staff, and lead ongoing school wide improvement practice. School leaders strive to see that all students have the resources and support to experience educational success.

Key practice and strategies include:

School management

- Equity, access, and targeted resourcing
- Tools and database to organize and manage
- Stewardship of financial and operational resources

Compliance and Life Without Barriers Education, State and Federal Government education policy and procedure

- Policy registers and version control
- Legislative tracking and assurance cycle
- Mandatory training and compliance induction
- Clear procedures, reporting pathways and documentation

Governance

- School Governance
- Cultural Governance

Development of self and others

- Workforce development plans
- Professional development and learning plans
- Professional Supervision

School vision, values, and strategic plan

- Collaborative development
- Alignment across policies
- Regular reviews and communication
- Data-informed decision making

School improvement framework

- Continuous improvement cycles
- Evidence-based practices
- Transparent reporting
- Professional learning communities

Child Protection and Safeguarding

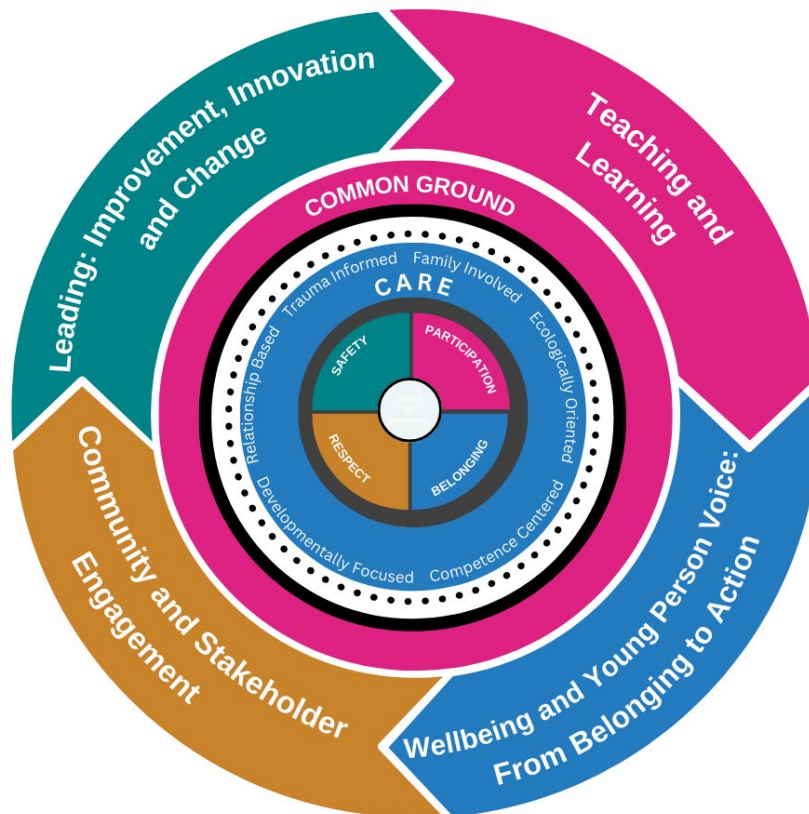
- Mandatory training
- Clear reporting protocols
- Student education
- Regular policy audits

Reconciliation: Narragunawali RAP

- Cultural awareness training
- Curriculum integration
- Community partnerships
- Visible commitment

In summary, the **Life Without Barriers Teaching and Learning Model** brings together the **Vision**, the Life Without Barriers Pedagogy and the **Education Practice Model**.

This integrated model emphasises the interconnectedness of effective education practice and the relational and trauma informed approaches of CARE and WoW to create a common ground where the school community learns together in a supportive, responsive, and thriving educational environment.



3. Building Practice Excellence

Building practice excellence is embedded throughout the Education Pedagogy model in a range of strategies and practices including supervision, communities of practice, reflective practice, and professional development.

Specifically for teaching staff, Life Without Barriers Education implements the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, developed by the Australian the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). The Standards are a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. They define the work of teachers and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective teaching in 21st century schools that will improve educational outcomes for students. The Standards do this by providing a framework which makes clear the knowledge, practice and professional engagement required across teachers' careers.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE		PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE			PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT								
1	Know students and how they learn	2	Know the content and how to teach it	3	Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning	4	Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments	5	Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning	6	Engage in professional learning	7	Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community

Social Work, Youth Work, and other multidisciplinary positions are similarly supported by their industry practice standards through relevant associations, for example:

- Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)
- Community Work Australia
- Occupational Therapy Board of Australia
- Speech Pathology Australia

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