

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker roles typically explore your cultural knowledge, your ability to build relationships, and your practical approach to supporting students. They often include a mix of process, behavioural, scenario, and cultural safety questions.

- **Process:** Questions that ask you to walk through how you would handle a common situation, such as settling a new student or supporting attendance.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask for a specific example from your past experience, usually about supporting a student, working with families, or collaborating with teachers.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations that test your judgement, cultural sensitivity, and ability to think on your feet, such as responding to a request for cultural content or a disengaged family.
- **Cultural safety:** Questions about your understanding of cultural safety and how you would promote it in a school setting, including your own cultural knowledge and connections.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about how you would communicate with and support families and community members, often focusing on empathy, trust-building, and conflict resolution.

The interview is usually a panel format, often including a school principal, a deputy or head of department, and sometimes an Aboriginal community representative. It typically begins with introductions and an overview of the role, then moves through a series of questions covering your experience, cultural capabilities, and practical approaches. You may be asked to provide examples of past work with Indigenous students and families. Some schools include a follow-up conversation with community members or a walk-through of the school to see the environment.

1. Walk me through how you would support a new Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student who is struggling to settle into the school.

Why they ask

This process question assesses your practical approach to a common challenge and your ability to build trust with a student who may feel isolated.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: start with initial contact and relationship-building, then outline how you would work with the family, teachers, and community, and finish with how you would monitor progress.

Example answer

"First, I would introduce myself to the student and their family, ideally with a community member present if that helps. I would spend time getting to know the student's interests and strengths, and make sure they know I am there for them. I would then talk with their teachers to understand any learning needs and arrange classroom support that is culturally appropriate. I would also connect the student with a peer buddy or an elder if that is suitable. Over the next few weeks, I would check in regularly, monitor their attendance and engagement, and adjust my support as needed. I would keep the family informed and involved throughout."

2. Tell me about a time when you helped a student improve their attendance or engagement. What did you do and what was the outcome?

Why they ask

This behavioural question looks for evidence of your ability to make a tangible difference, using a real example from your experience.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task you took on, the actions you took, and the result. Keep the result focused on the student's progress and your role in it.

Example answer

"At my previous school, a Year 9 student had been missing about two days a week. I was asked to help re-engage him. I started by visiting his family with a community liaison officer to understand what was going on. We found he was feeling disconnected from the curriculum and was being bullied. I worked with his teachers to adjust some tasks to include more hands-on learning, and I set up a weekly yarnning session where he could talk about his culture and feel proud of it. I also paired him with a mentor. Over the term, his attendance improved to nearly every day, and he started contributing more in class. His mother told me he was happier coming to school."

3. A teacher asks you to help with a lesson on Aboriginal culture. How would you ensure it is culturally appropriate and respectful?

Why they ask

This scenario question tests your cultural knowledge, your understanding of protocols, and your ability to work with community to avoid tokenism or misrepresentation.

How to structure your answer

Show your judgement under pressure by explaining the steps you would take to consult, verify, and deliver content respectfully. Highlight the importance of local community involvement and your own cultural boundaries.

Example answer

"I would first ask the teacher what they are hoping to cover and why. Then I would check whether the content is relevant to the local Aboriginal community and whether there are any protocols I need to follow. I would reach out to local elders or the community education officer to ask for guidance and, if possible, invite them to contribute. I would avoid speaking on behalf of all Aboriginal people and instead share my own knowledge where appropriate, making clear that I am not an expert on every group. I would also suggest using resources that have been endorsed by the community. After the lesson, I would debrief with the teacher to see what worked and what could be improved."

4. How would you handle a situation where a parent is hesitant to engage with the school?

Why they ask

This client-facing question assesses your empathy, communication skills, and ability to build trust with families who may have had negative experiences with institutions.

How to structure your answer

Structure your answer around empathy and relationship-building: acknowledge the parent's feelings, show you would listen without judgement, and outline practical steps to build a connection over time.

Example answer

"I would start by acknowledging that their hesitation is understandable and that I respect their decision. I would ask if they are comfortable sharing what has made them feel that way, and just listen. I would explain my role and that I am there to support their child, not to pressure them. I might offer to meet somewhere they feel comfortable, like a community centre, or arrange for a respected community member to join. I would follow up with small, consistent gestures, like a phone call to share something positive about their child, and gradually build trust. If they still prefer not to engage directly, I would work with other family members or community contacts to ensure the student is supported."

5. What strategies do you use to monitor and improve student attendance, and what tools do you use?

Why they ask

This technical question checks your familiarity with school systems and your practical approach to attendance, a key part of the role.

How to structure your answer

Give a clear, practical demonstration: describe the tools you use, how you track attendance, and the follow-up steps you take. Mention specific systems like Sentral or Compass and how you use them.

Example answer

"I use the school's attendance system, such as Sentral or Compass, to check daily records and identify patterns. I look for students who are missing multiple days or arriving late, and I follow up with a phone call or home visit. I work with the family to understand any barriers, like transport or health, and connect them with support. I also work with teachers to make sure the student feels engaged when they are at school, because attendance improves when students feel they belong. I keep notes on each student's progress and share updates with the wellbeing team. Over time, I celebrate improvements with the student and family to keep motivation up."

6. What does cultural safety mean to you in a school setting, and how would you promote it?

Why they ask

This cultural safety question explores your understanding of the concept and your ability to embed it in everyday practice, which is central to the role.

How to structure your answer

Be reflective and practical: define cultural safety in your own words, then give concrete examples of how you would promote it among students, staff, and the wider school community.

Example answer

"For me, cultural safety means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feel respected, valued, and free to be themselves without fear of judgement or racism. It is about creating an environment where their culture is seen as a strength. I would promote it by building relationships with students and families, and by being a visible, trusted person they can come to. I would also work with teachers to embed Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum in a genuine way, not just as a token gesture. I would call out racism or bias when I see it and support staff to learn more. I would also make sure school events and spaces acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous cultures. Most importantly, I would listen to students and community and act on their feedback."