Contemporary Australia has a vast need for the education and awareness of Indigenous Australian students, and also indigenous culture in the education system – both primary and high school levels. In order to achieve social justice, schools must incorporate pedagogies that work toward reconciliation, and bridging the gap between indigenous, and non-Indigenous Australians. Teaching for resistance is an extremely important and useful model that schools can incorporate into their teachings and theories to help bridge this gap and allow the upcoming generations more aware, educated and reconciled, essentially making Australia a better country to live in for all cultures and lifestyles – achieving social justice.

Reconciliation pedagogy can be incorporated into classrooms and schoolyards across Australia in various ways. However, for the sake of reconciliation, it is imperative that teachers are aware of the issues of Indigenous people, especially if they personally teach Indigenous Students, or have Indigenous Students at the school in which they teach: “It is important for teachers to be aware of this and to be sensitive to the special needs, cultural traits and behaviour of Aboriginal children”¹ In order for students, especially those that are Indigenous Australians to learn effectively, and feel at home in the classroom and that they have a place in the classroom – teachers must possess an understanding about Indigenous Students different way of life in regards to cultural traits, and learning styles. The informational booklet: Strategy for Teaching Aboriginal Children confirms that teachers must possess this knowledge and awareness: “Throughout the years a lack of understanding about Aboriginal people and Aboriginal cultures has had an adverse effect on the education

Awareness and adequate teacher education is imperative before pedagogy for reconciliation can be taught in schools. If teachers and prospective teachers are educated about the importance of reconciliation and also issues concerning Indigenous Australians, then they will be much more effective in getting the message across to their students, resulting in effective teaching, and social justice. *Reconciliation: Lower Primary Teacher Resource Book* explains in the foreword by Linda Burney, Director General of New South Wales Department of Aboriginal affairs that resources for reconciliation should have been given to schools a long time before they were introduced. Burney explains:

> What a welcome sight the Reconciliation resources would have been when I was going to school. It would have been both revolutionary and reassuring. My own school experience, like most Australians of my generation, was essentially the teaching of a false history of Australia and a curriculum that did not, or at best, reflected a distorted and ugly image of Aboriginal Australia.

The Australian education system has clearly changed since Burney was a school student, but there is still work to be done in order for reconciliation to occur, and for Indigenous Australian students to thrive in the classroom. Also, the education system must continue to strive for attendance rates, and literacy and numeracy capabilities of Indigenous Australian students to become more acceptable, and comparable to those of non-Indigenous Australian students. The Reconciliation resource book as mentions above has a series of activities for students to complete, and a variety of informational resources to allow both students and teachers to learn to appreciate and reflect upon their Indigenous peers, and Indigenous culture in general. The book aims to teach primary school aged students about the culture of Indigenous Australians by providing sound examples such as teaching about native animals, and their Indigenous names, and also dreamtime stories behind them. It also gives children the chance to reflect upon their own families, and look at a variety of family settings including those of Indigenous Australians. The Reconciliation resource book is also not the only resource available for teachers in order to educate their students about Indigenous Australians.

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peoples and reconciliation. In regards to educating non-Indigenous teachers about the Indigenous students they may teach at some point in their careers (or currently are teaching), there are several sound resources to assist them in their learning and awareness, and resources that also give them ideas to work from in order to successfully educate both non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australian students. The teaching resource text: *Education and Training for Indigenous Students - What has worked (and what will again)* has several great information sources to help teachers with Indigenous Students. For example, it suggests that in the Secondary School setting, a strategy outlines “Professional development focused on cultural awareness for non-Indigenous teachers is important in terms of their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Students and their cultures, and frequently leads to some re-shaping of teacher attitudes and more positive and productive interactions between non-Indigenous teachers and Indigenous Students.” Teaching educators about cultural awareness and Indigenous issues could consequently help to re-shape teacher perspectives, allowing them to think more positively in regards to Indigenous Students. This essentially, is what’s needed in order to achieve reconciliation, and an effective classroom. It’s also pivotal that teachers are positive and aware of Indigenous culture and learning styles, so that their own attitudes can reflect through their teachings, allowing students to feel a similar sense of positivity, especially in regards to their Indigenous peers, community members, and towards the idea of bridging the gap, reconciliation. This sense of positivity will also reduce the likelihood of racism in the school yard, or classroom.

In order to begin to achieve Reconciliation in classrooms across Australia, it is important that teaching strategies are incorporated in to every classroom environment to raise awareness about cultural difference, take action, and consequently prepare our students for a better, more equal and reconciled future. The *Teaching for Resistance model* is capable of achieving this goal in classrooms. The *Teaching for Resistance model* from the Education for Social Justice Research group 1994 outlines three factors important for ‘teaching for resistance’. Those being: 1 – raising consciousness, 2 – Making Contact; and 3 – Taking action. These three points can be achieved in various methods of teaching. For example, to raise consciousness in the classroom, teachers can teach about Indigenous culture by using

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4 the SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team (2000). *Education and Training for Indigenous Students - What has worked (and will again)*. Australia: National Capital Printing, Canberra. 16.

Dreamtime stories, Native animals and their Aboriginal names, and in various other ways. Dreamtime stories are a great way to educate both primary and secondary students about Indigenous Australian culture through a variety of subjects, such as English, SOSE, Art, or even Drama. In a primary school English setting, a teacher could use a Dreamtime story such as *How the birds got their colours* told by Mary Albert. The book is “*based on a story told by Mary Albers of the Bardi tribe to Aboriginal children living in Broome, Western Australia*”\(^6\). A book such as this is perfect for young children as it teaches them about how Aboriginals tell stories, and also the meaning behind them. The imagery is fitting for a young audience, and the book in general is a great resource to introduce the learning and awareness of Indigenous culture in Australia. For older children, such as middle school students; Dreamtime stories could be a great resource to get them to think about Symbolism, and the use of language, form and social context – especially in an English classroom. In studies of Society and Environment, teachers could use maps of Australia that Indigenous Australian’s have created, and teach them about how Aboriginals have special names for places around the country. Another topic that could be incorporated in to the SOSE classroom is ‘*Australian Identities*’ – in which students can learn about Australia’s past, and the discrimination and wrongdoings that occurred within Australian society. Teachers could raise awareness in a topic such as this, about how important reconciliation is. *Heinemann Outcomes: SOSE 1, Studies in Society and Environment*\(^7\) provides a great resource for Australian Identities, which talks not only about Indigenous Australians, and the history of Australia, but also the global village. This is useful, as if there were students of Indigenous heritage in the classroom, this topic would still be useful to teach, as it does not single out that particular student. In an Art based subject, a teacher, for example could show students a series of dot-paintings, and get students to recreate some dot-paintings themselves, or, in older children, get them to make a painting that reflects something close to their heart, one that has meaning – which is essentially what dot-paintings mean to Indigenous Australians. In a drama classroom, teachers can get students to act out dreamtime stories in their own ways, which consequently gets them thinking about the Indigenous culture, allowing them to become more aware of Indigenous culture - which also helps in bridging the gap, and acceptance of Indigenous people. These are only several examples, of the multitude of topics that can be covered in

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Australia to teach students about Indigenous Australian culture through using relevant resources. As well as teaching students about the culture, art and life of Indigenous Australians, a part of teaching for resistance is making contact. This can be done in schools by inviting Indigenous Australian speakers to talk to the students, and also perhaps getting students involved in the community, especially in rural or remote areas where Aboriginals are often situated. Contact, group work, and guest speakers both educate and get the students involved with the community which, in regards to reconciliation, and the Teaching for Resistance model, is an imperative step to make. Guest speakers of Indigenous background could tell a Dreamtime story in his, or her own cultural way, and then answer any questions that a student may have in regards to the Dreamtime story, or the importance of these stories to the Aboriginal culture in Australia. In a school with Indigenous Students, it may be helpful hold a group talk about pathways to tertiary education, and the importance of education – held by Indigenous people who have gone one to study at university level, or stayed in school. The third and final step in regards to Teaching for Resistance is: taking action. On a personal account, I have personally seen action implemented in a school in regards to teaching for resistance, in regards to Indigenous Culture. Loreto College, Marryatville specified one school week to teach its pupils about Aboriginal culture, history, heritage, land, and art. Guest speakers were invited, land was honoured, questions were asked, and answered; and consequently, the students at the school learned a considerable amount about Indigenous perspectives and culture. Upon review of this week, it was found to be quite successful, and will be done again in the future. These examples could help bridge the gap and not only allow Aboriginal students to feel safe, and supported, but also it raises awareness to non-Indigenous Students and teaches them something about their countries history, and multiculturalism. Consequently, the more awareness, and acceptance of Indigenous Australians and their cultural traits taught to school children, and young people – the more likely reconciliation can actually occur, allowing Australia to function as a whole, and equal place.

In paring together pedagogies of reconciliation, and Teaching for Resistance, schools can be well on their way to help shaping a better Australia. Evidently, it is important that both teachers and students become knowledgeable of Indigenous Australian culture, and learn to accept the differences that lie between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It is also markedly imperative that in order for teachers to be well rounded educators, they must learn to think positively about Aboriginals, and their Indigenous Students, so that students can
thrive from their positivity, and hopefully learn to view these issues in an equally positive light. This will ensure that reconciliation, and acceptance is happening in the classroom, and school yard alike. To adequately use the *Teaching for Resistance model*, that has been proven to be quite effective in schools, knowledge must be taught, contact must be made, and action must take place. As expressed earlier, by teaching students from an early age about the Aboriginal culture in Australia, and adapting Indigenous perspective to topics across the curriculum, all the way in to secondary school, students will be able to use their knowledge to form their own opinions on the culture and perspectives of Indigenous Australians, allowing for acceptance of their Indigenous peers, and community members alike. The second step to teaching for resistance is making contact, which can be done through guest speakers, community involvement, and many other measures to get students and teachers involved and educated about Indigenous Australians. Lastly, taking action is the final step of the teaching for resistance model, which can be achieved through planning structures that work in the classroom, implementing a solid system, and evaluating the action taken to ensure that both Indigenous and non Indigenous Students are learning to the best of their ability, and in hopes that the bridge between the two can be closed, allowing room for reconciliation, which ultimately is what Australia is aiming for. Furthermore, reconciliation starts in the classroom. If teachers and students work together now, to help bridge the gap and raise awareness of the Indigenous culture in Australia and perspective, reconciliation is ultimately possible.
References:


the SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team (2000). *Education and Training for Indigenous Students - What has worked (and will again)*. Australia: National Capital Printing, Canberra. 16.