

CMYI State-wide Multicultural Youth Issues Meeting  
International Colloquium on  
**More than tolerance: Strategies for addressing racism  
and discrimination in schools**

25 October 2007

**Racism in Victorian Schools: what Do We  
know?**

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# Outline

- Existing policies relevant to diversity/racism
- The current research project
- Key findings
- Key initiatives to address intercultural relations in general

# The “Big Picture”: Cultural Diversity and Education Policy

## Commonwealth Policy Initiatives

- Discovering Democracy (1997-2004)
- National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (1999)
- Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity (2003)
- National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (2005)

# The “Big Picture”: Cultural Diversity and Education Policy

## **Victorian Government Policy Initiatives**

- Multicultural Policy for Victorian Schools (1997)
- Guidelines for Managing Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Schools (2001)
- Blueprint for Government Schools (2003)
- Victorian Curriculum Reform Project (2004)
- Multicultural Victoria Act (2004)
- Victorian Education Learning Standards (VELS) (2005)

# Multicultural Victoria Act (2004)

## School councils are committed to:

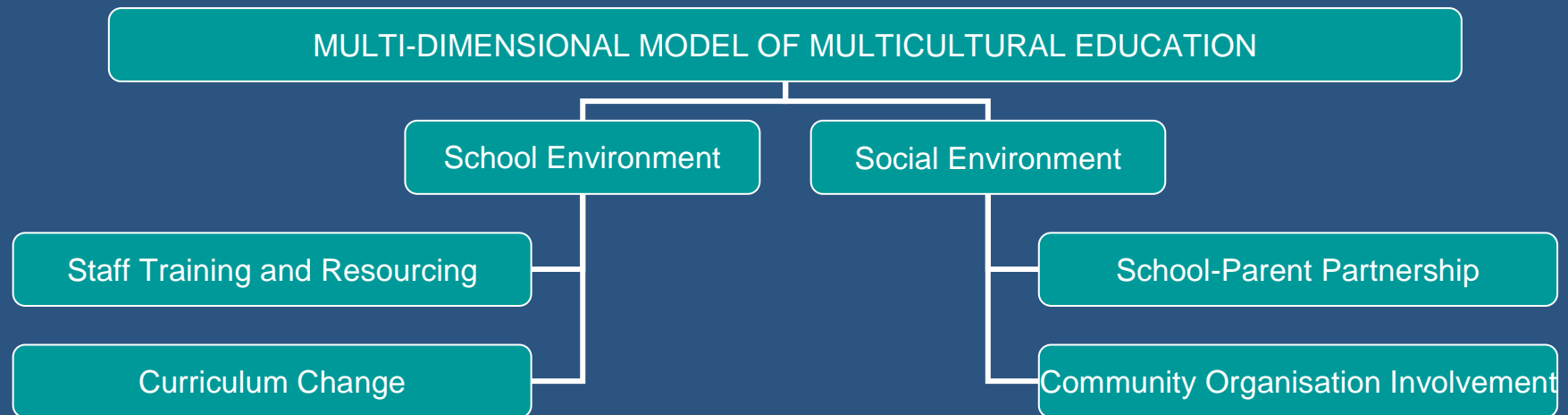
- Ensuring that the contents of any existing policy document including the Accountability and Improvement Framework, particularly the school profile, codes of practice and the student code of conduct reflect the principles of multiculturalism.
- promoting and preserving diversity and cultural heritage among members of the school community
- all members of the school community are equally entitled to access opportunities and participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political life of Victoria
- Encouraging and facilitating the participation by all parents in school community activities and decision making, taking into account the principles of multiculturalism

# Multicultural Victoria Act (2004)

## School staff are committed to:

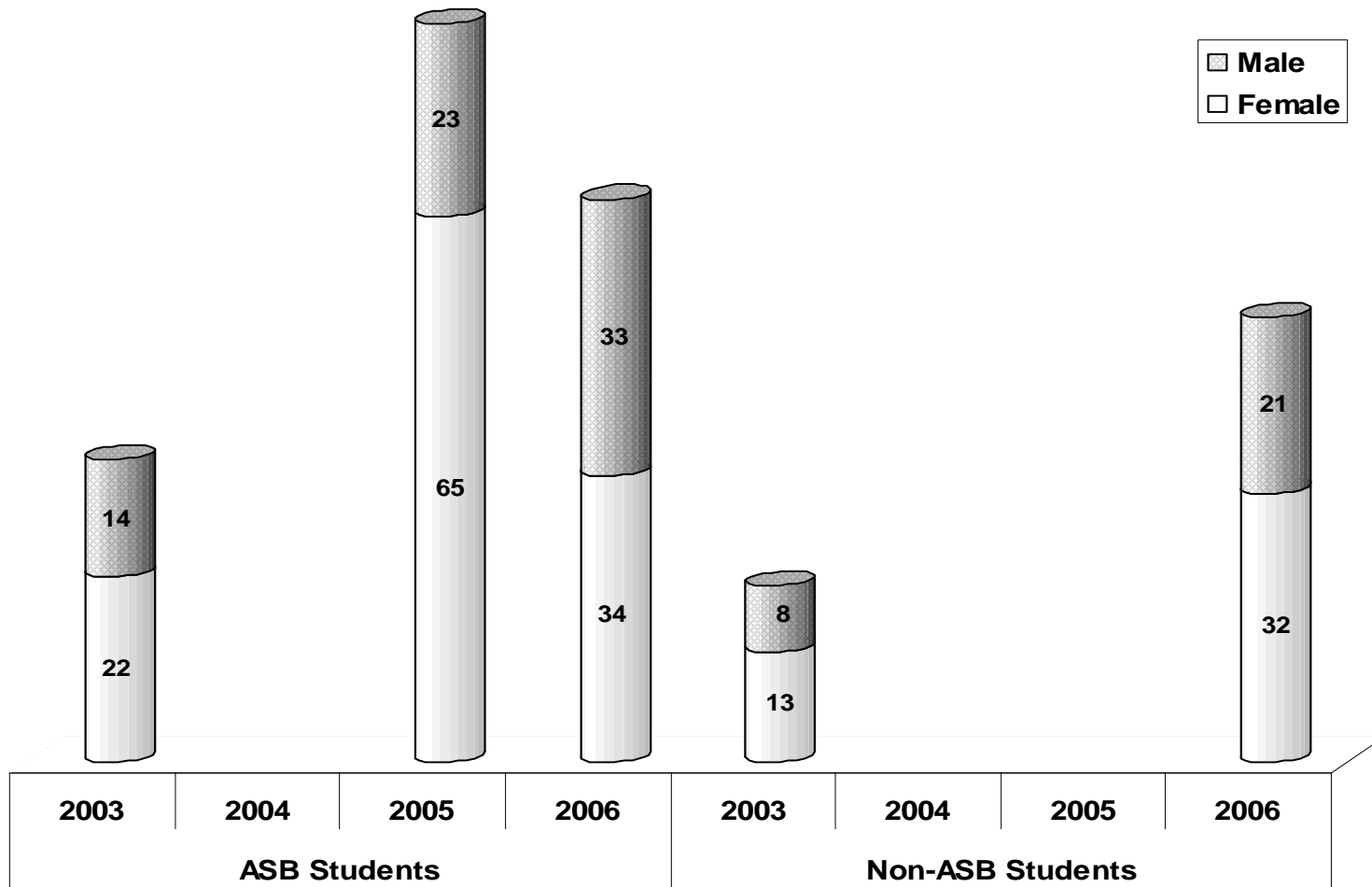
- Promoting and affirming diversity in all aspects of their work practices and interactions with students, parents, other staff
- Ensuring curriculum programs and classroom materials incorporate multicultural perspectives and reflect a range of cultural experiences
- Using teaching and assessment strategies that cater for a range of learning styles
- Monitoring the school environment in terms of promoting and preserving diversity and cultural heritage and assisting the school's efforts to incorporate the principles of multiculturalism

# Multicultural Education Model



# Data collection

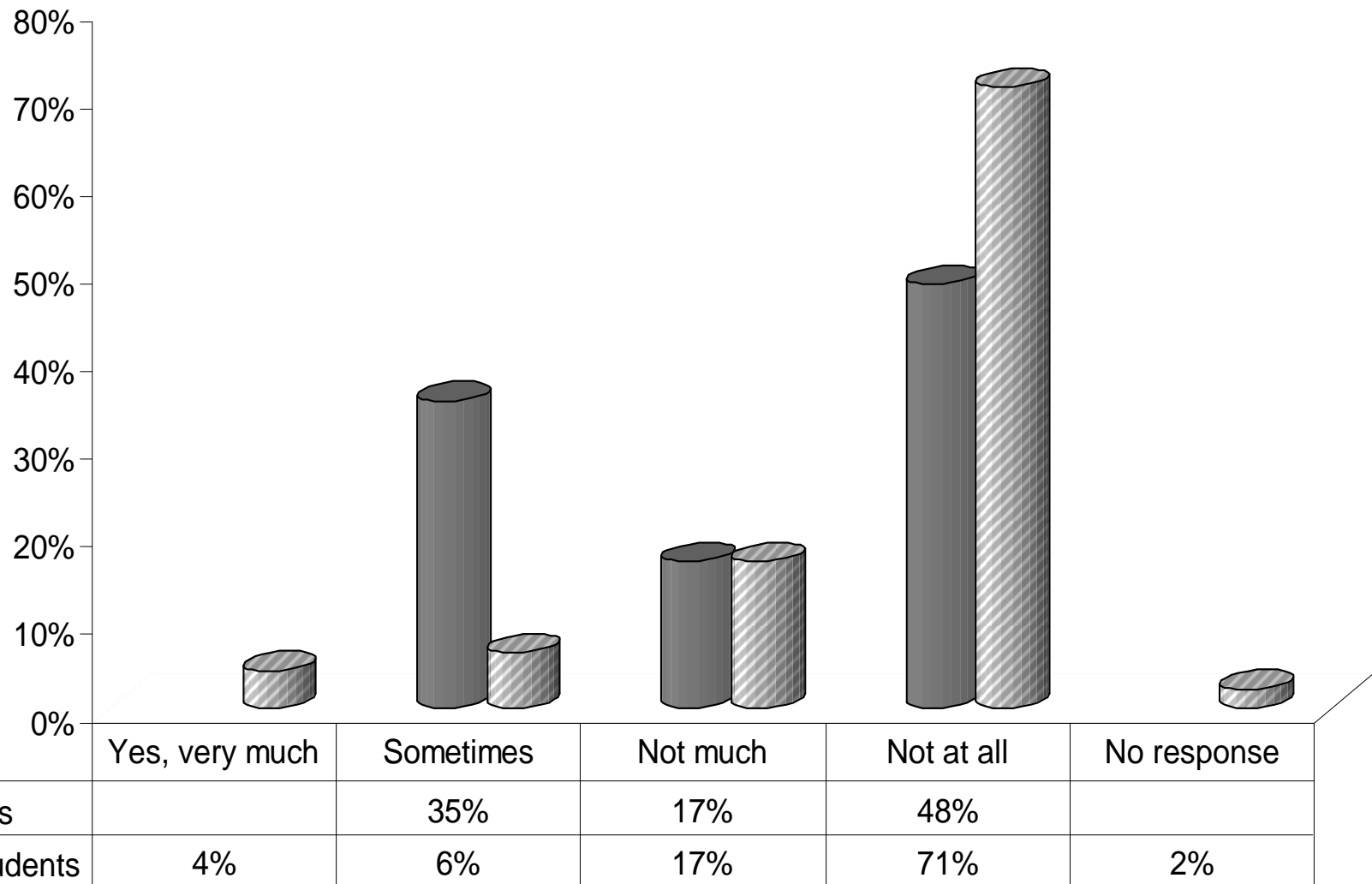
Students Surveyed and Interviewed - 2003 to 2006



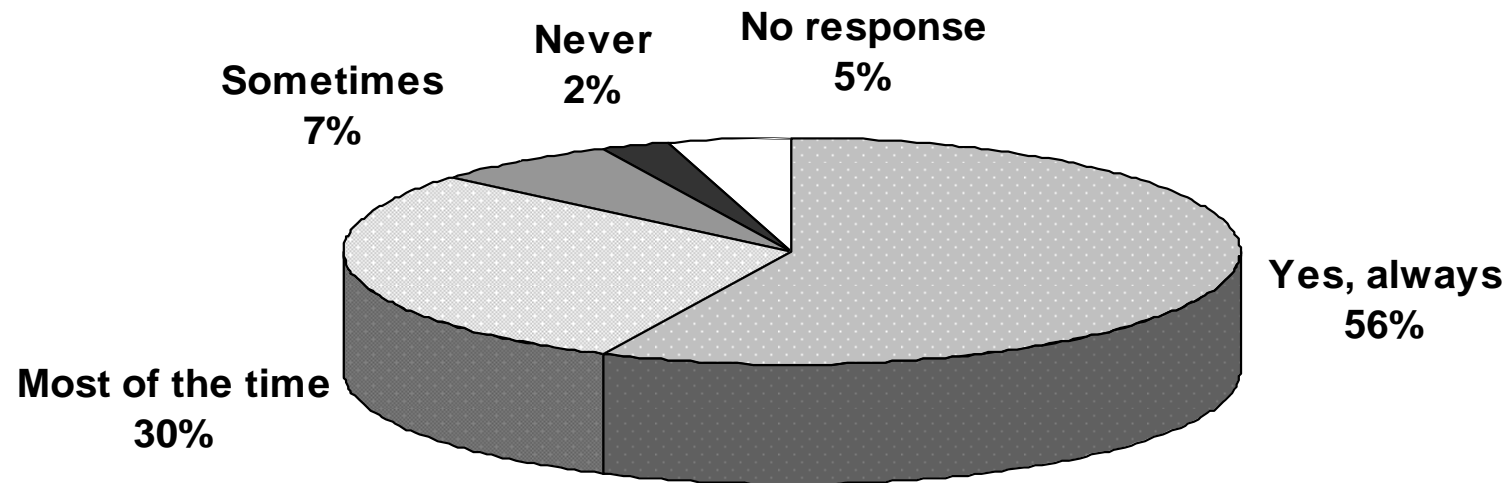
# Data collection in 2005

Participants	Blackwood College	Clayfield Girls Secondary College	Subtotal
Students	<p>25 Arabic-speaking background students (surveys and focus group)</p> <p>11 non-Arabic speaking background students (surveys and focus group)</p>	<p>12 Arabic-speaking background students (surveys and focus group)</p> <p>10 non-Arabic-speaking background students (surveys and focus group)</p>	58 students
Staff	28 surveys 1 interview	27 surveys 1 interview	67 staff
Parents	3 surveys and group discussion	4 surveys and group discussion	7 parents
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	68 participants	54 participants	122 participants
<b>TOTAL</b>	122 participants		

# Do you feel teachers treat you differently because of your cultural background?

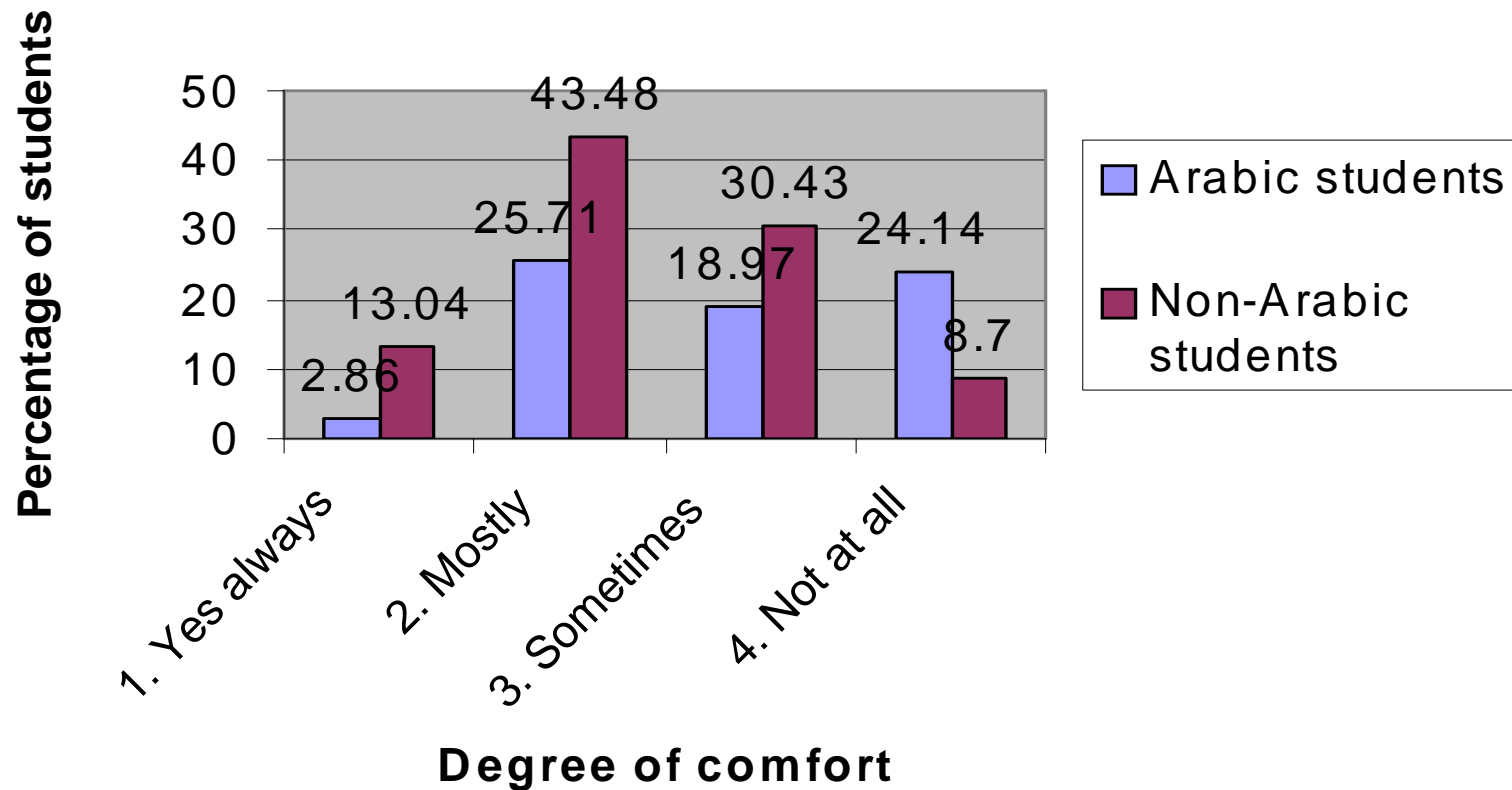


# Do you feel comfortable approaching school staff members with questions or concerns?



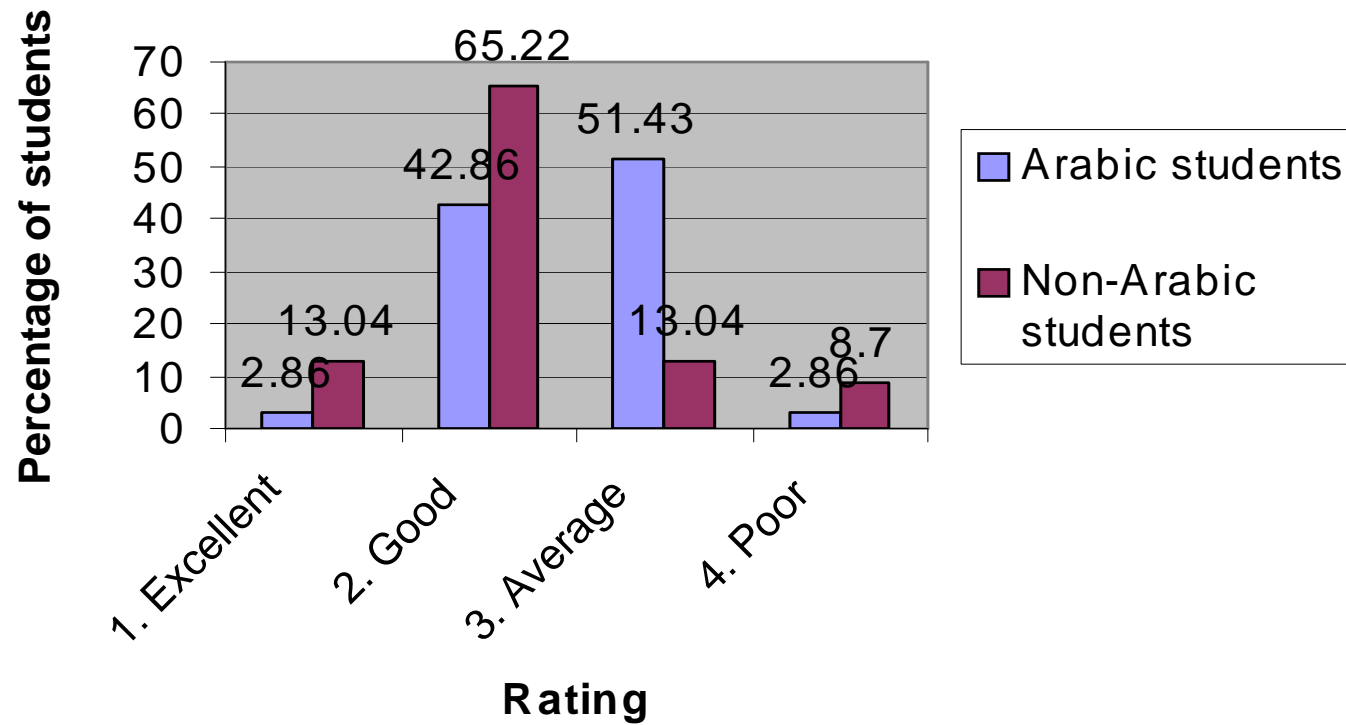
# Students' surveys

## 1. Comfort Talking to Staff about Problems



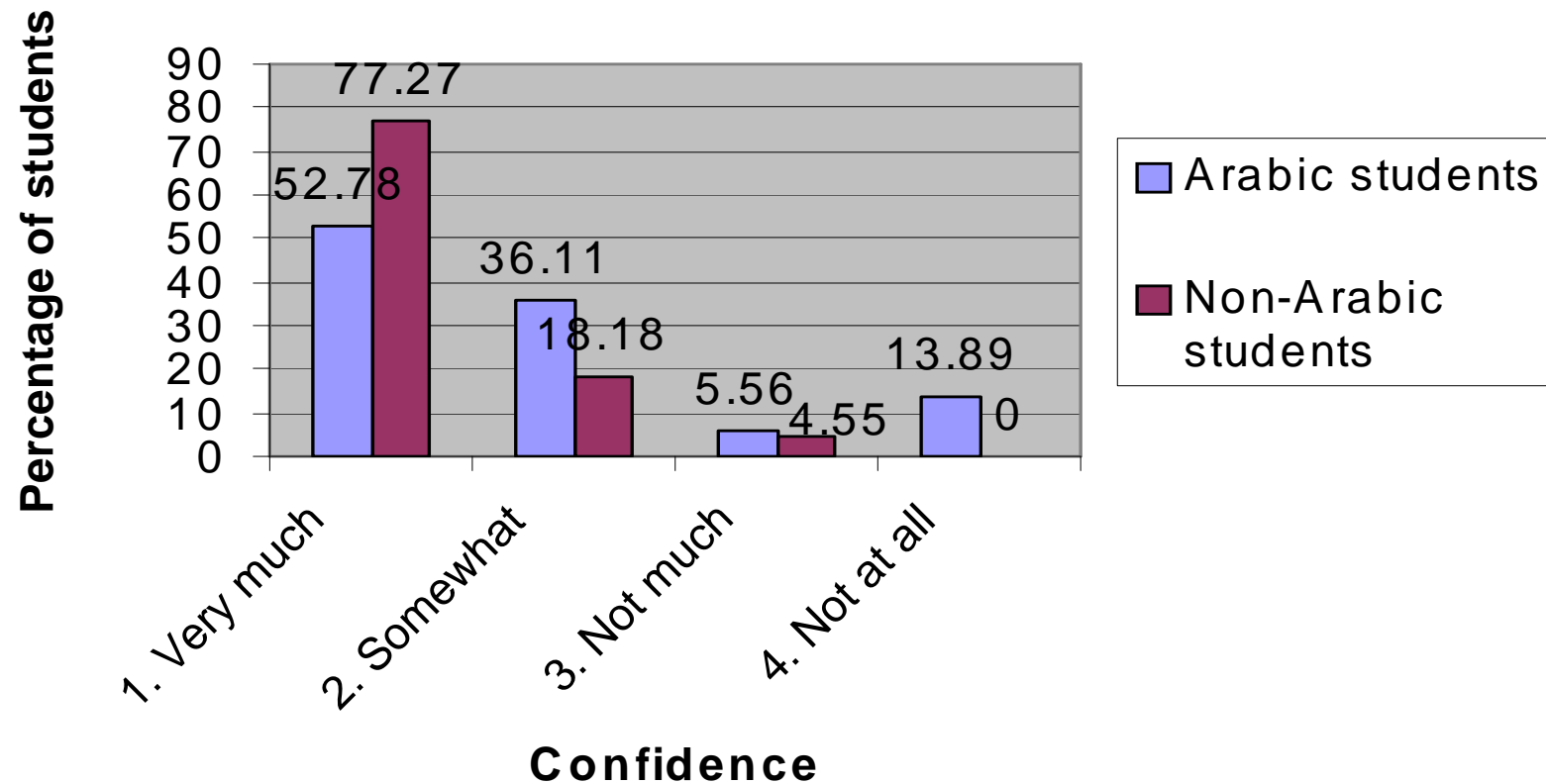
# Inter-ethnic relations

## 2. Perceptions of Ethnic Relations at School



# Aspirations for further studies

## 3. Confidence in pursuing further education



# Summary of students' questionnaires

- Student perceptions of the school's educational standards and students' educational ambitions: ASB boys often stated that they found the school environment inert and unengaging, arguing that this dragged them back academically.
- The non-ASB students were generally more positive about teachers, though still reported negative feelings about the learning environment more generally. They felt that the general learning environment was unengaging, subject selection too limited, school reputation poor, and studies unchallenging.
- ASB students were very concerned about the 'perceived' increase in racism against Arabic and Muslim communities in Australia, associated with global and local events. The boys felt that the media vilified and misrepresented their culture, and that they were targeted by police on account of their cultural background. The girls discussed particular instances of racism, especially relating to wearing the *hijab*.

# Students' perspectives on social experiences: a qualitative snapshot

- Throughout the focus group discussions, students argued that political events, most notably September 11, had changed the way Arab-Australians are perceived and treated by the community. The students discussed the conflation of Arab and Muslim communities into a singular homogeneous category, constructed as synonymous with threat and terrorism, and often identified through visual markers of difference:
  - *"Like all Arabs are terrorists. Especially girls with scarves".*

# Cont...

- Female students recounted numerous instances of verbal abuse, while male students more commonly identified instances of structural exclusion from accessing mainstream social resources. Here a group of boys discuss racialised barriers to employment:

*It's hard to get a job these days 'cause you're Lebbo  
(Lebanese). I swear to God.*

*Some people have to change their name.*

*My brother can't even get a job 'cause his name's Osama.*

*My second name is Mohammed, and when they read that, they  
go, you're bad.*

*Especially the media, 'cause the media, they show us as bad people through the news.*

*And they always refer, 'they are Lebbo'.*

*Yeah, 'they are Lebbo' and they mention our religion.*

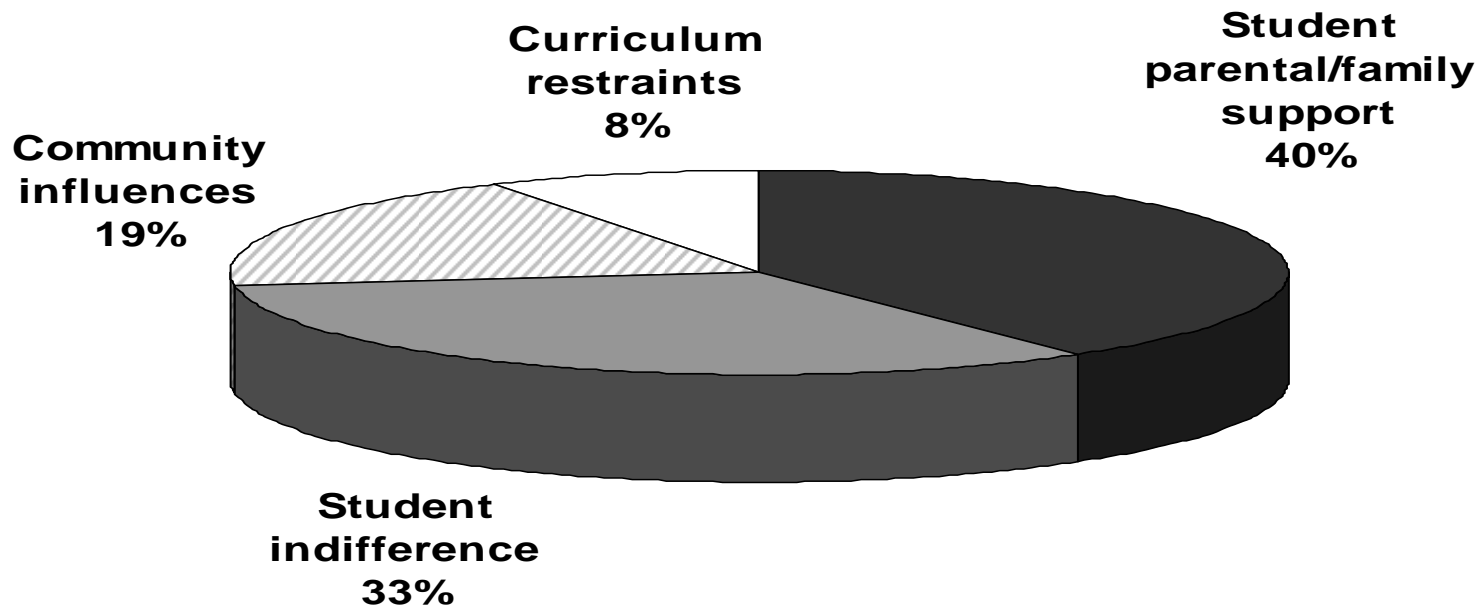
*'Oh, they're Muslims.' See, they don't go, 'oh, a Christian man raped this girl', it's all 'a Muslim man raped this girl'.*

*Yeah, and every time a Lebanese or someone Muslim does something they get jailed, and if some Aussie would go kidnap a baby, they'd get ...*

*It would just say 'A man kidnapped a baby'. If it was a Muslim, 'an Arab kidnapped this kid', they wouldn't say a man.*

- The following excerpt from an exchange between two boys highlights the uncertainty many students expressed about claiming a hybrid Lebanese-Australian identity:
  - ***Student A:*** *I don't like being, you know, Lebbo and English, 'cause like, I'm both, right, and I still get teased, see no one teases me, "oh you're Aussie, you're half this that", they always come to me "oh you're Lebbo you're Lebbo", like that, especially Aussies, like they don't know that I'm half, so they always go "you're Lebbo".*
  - ***Student B:*** *But you're not necessarily half Aussie.*
  - ***Student A:*** *I was born here.*
  - ***Student B:*** *Alright, alright, I know what you mean.*

# Teachers' views: What are the key challenges you face as a teacher in a culturally diverse setting?



# Summary of key initiatives linked to this project:

- Parents: Community-Schools Partnership Project
- Policy/Practice: Model of Best Practice
- Pedagogy: Teacher Support Materials (TSM)

# Connecting the community

Through a Cultural Diversity Facilitator

- **Parent Involvement**
- **Community Involvement**
- **Extracurricular Activities**

# Diversity: An educational advantage

## Online teacher support



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[Theme 2: Expectations of Self, Family & Teachers](#)

[Theme 3: Relationships at School](#)

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[Theme 5: Cultural & Ethnic Tensions](#)

[Theme 6: Cultural Diversity & Multiculturalism](#)

[Theme 7: Curriculum, School & Culture](#)

## Curriculum Links and Related Values

### VALUES FOR AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLING MOST RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC

Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person's point of view

6. INTEGRITY

7. RESPECT

8. RESPONSIBILITY

9. UNDERSTANDING, TOLERANCE AND INCLUSION

Download the Nine Values for Australian Schooling:  
[9\\_point\\_values\\_with\\_flag\\_only.pdf](#) (pdf file, 49kb)

Suggestions as to how you can explore these topics within the context of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards are included in the resources here.

### Explore this theme

[Questions for Reflection](#)

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[Topic 1: Who am I? Who are you?](#)

[Topic 2: Creating connections, belonging, pride...](#)

[A Student's Perspective](#)

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[Topic 3: Everyone has a story. What's yours?](#)

[Topic 4: Increasing knowledge of self and others](#)

Curriculum links and related values

# Diversity: An educational advantage

## Online teacher support



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Theme 1: Identity & Belonging > Topic 4: Increasing knowledge of self and others

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## Topic 4: Increasing knowledge of self and others

This topic features a positive insight into one student's sense of belonging in Australia. The perspectives of parents from an Arabic speaking background are also included as a counterpoint to the insights of students and teachers.

**Tip:** Potential links between this topic and the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* are provided in the menu under "Curriculum Links and Related Values".



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**Topic 4: Increasing knowledge of self and others**

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## Student Snapshot 5

FEMALE STUDENT: I'm very privileged to have a house and have parents that you know love me and take care of me. When my parents ask me what I want to become when I'm older, I tell them I want to become a doctor and they get very happy because they want me to be happy.

Watch a video of this snapshot



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## Student Snapshot 6

FEMALE STUDENT: My dreams are to be a doctor. My family thinks it's ok. Some other people they think it's dangerous but I want to be a doctor. It's fine with my parents.

Watch a video of this snapshot



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# Conclusion

- This study's findings suggest that socio-political dynamics not only affect young Arab-Australians' sense of identity, but also their educational experiences.
- It is not suggested here that there is a direct causal correlation between the two or that the effect of racism and exclusion is the sole factor influencing Arab-Australian students' educational experiences.
- However, racism was a factor of concern readily and repeatedly identified by students and parents. While parents indicated that overt teacher racism is a rare phenomenon, students' reactions to particular instances of unhappy interactions with teachers cannot be dismissed as over-sensitivity.
- At the very least, this study's findings suggest that the effects of racism on young Arab-Australians, particularly since the events of September 11, have been underestimated in educational research and practice.

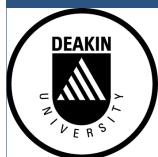
Diversity: An educational advantage  
Professional Development Workshop



# THANK YOU

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