

EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

**Student engagement
and re-engagement
in Queensland schools**





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Our goal



The Department of Education is committed to giving every child and young person every chance of a bright future.

We will not only support young people to remain engaged in education, we will also reach out to those who disconnect from school to re-engage them.



Introduction

Ensuring that all children and young people remain engaged in education and make a strong transition to further education, training or employment, is a priority for the Queensland Government.¹

Safe, supportive and inclusive schools with high-quality curriculum and pedagogy are key to ensuring every Queensland child and young person has the chance to reach their full potential. Most children and young people do well in Queensland schools, for example:

- ▶ Queensland schools have demonstrated the greatest improvement in NAPLAN of any state or territory.
- ▶ More Queensland students, including Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students, are successfully completing Year 12.

However, some children and young people experience barriers to successful participation. Disengagement² can happen at any phase of

education, from early childhood through to senior secondary schooling. Timely and skilled interventions can support many students to get back on track. For other children and young people, there will need to be intensive and sustained interventions throughout their learning pathway.

Everybody's Business outlines an evidence-based approach to meeting the needs of children and young people who are at risk of disengaging, or who are disengaged from education. It outlines components of a strong and inclusive system. It has been developed to support Queensland state schools, regional staff in the Department of Education and other stakeholders to maximise engagement and re-engagement of young Queenslanders in education.

¹ This aligns with the Queensland Government's objective to engage more Queenslanders in education, training and work. See *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities* (www.ourfuture.qld.gov.au) for more information.

² Fredericks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C. and Paris, A. H. (2004) School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence Review of Educational Research, 74 (1), p59-109. Fredericks et al. (2004) define engagement as consisting of three dimensions: cognitive – a student's psychological investment in their own learning; behaviour – a student's participation in learning activities; and emotional – a student's relationships with learning, teachers and others in the learning environment. Disengagement occurs when children and young people experience disconnection across one or all of these domains.



A system of programs and services

Meeting the needs of all students

Queensland's schooling system aims to meet the needs of all students from Prep to Year 12. This means building a strong system of options for children and young people who are at risk or disengaged.

Inclusive mainstream schooling

Safe, supportive and inclusive schools with high-quality curriculum and pedagogy are an essential component of a strong system.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to meeting the needs of any student. All schools need to provide differentiated responses to their students. Many students experience challenges at various junctures in their school life, and for most students, remaining at their school provides their best chance of success. Queensland state schools are resourced to provide a wide range of support, such as the Positive Behaviour for Learning approach and targeted interventions.

Furthermore, students are able to maintain peer relationships, transport arrangements, uninterrupted study and a sense of inclusion and connectedness with their school community. Additionally, mainstream schools, for the main part, achieve greatest economy of scale and are therefore more cost-efficient.

Some young people experience complex situations that warrant an alternative arrangement. The Department of Education works to minimise the need for this wherever possible, as mainstream schooling generally offers the best outcomes for young people. However, it is recognised that for a small number, alternative education will be their path through to Year 12 or equivalent.

Intervention models

Targeted, timely and sustained interventions play an important role in maximising engagement and outcomes.

Education professionals all know that prevention is better than intervention, but where this fails, early intervention is the key to success.

Across all education and training settings, some children and young people require intervention to support them to remain engaged in their education or training setting. Such interventions might include:

- ▶ individualised case management
- ▶ attendance improvement plans
- ▶ success coaches
- ▶ mentors
- ▶ behaviour support
- ▶ counselling
- ▶ welfare support (for example, bus fares, uniforms, food)
- ▶ referral to health services, or other services
- ▶ complex case management panels.

Intervention is everybody's business, and everyone in a school plays a role in supporting young people in need of intervention. The most effective interventions are delivered by a cohesive team, under the leadership or guidance of someone skilled and experienced in intervention and in assessment of individual student needs. In many cases, multidisciplinary teams are required to provide the necessary professional support including psychological, behavioural and educational expertise, and cross-agency collaboration or referrals should be considered as part of an intervention plan wherever necessary.

Re-engagement approaches

Where students become disengaged from education or training, a concerted effort is made to ensure they are supported to re-engage.

This may occur through a range of approaches. In many instances, where enrolling schools become aware of prolonged student attendance issues, they will make every effort to re-engage the student. This occurs through case management back into the school setting from which the student disengaged, or referral to another eligible option.¹

In some cases, other agencies may refer the student to the Department of Education regional office, or the regional office will seek out young people not attending schooling. Officers within the region will take a direct role in supporting disengaged young people and managing their positive transitions. In addition, regional Youth Engagement Hubs work with schools and other agencies to support students to re-engage in education, training or employment, and collaborate with other agencies that may be working with those young people.

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1. Parents may be prosecuted if they do not fulfil their legal obligations in regard to enrolment and attendance of their child at school, or participation in an eligible option in accordance with the Education (General Provisions) Act (2006).



Alternative education pathways

It is vital to maintain the right balance of learning pathways and options. School principals focus on the retention of their students, including those with more complex needs or challenging behaviours.

At the same time, it is important that options are available for young people who cannot thrive in mainstream settings. A principal's decision to refer a student to an alternative setting will only occur after there have been significant attempts to meet the student's needs, respectful consultation with the student and their parents/carers, and careful consideration of the alternative options.

Alternative options may include, but are not confined to:

- ▶ non-state special assistance schools
- ▶ schools of distance education (where specialist programs are provided)
- ▶ programs funded through Skilling Queenslanders for Work for young people aged 15 or older and no longer at school:
 - Get Set for Work
 - Youth Skills
 - Ready for Work
 - Community Work Skills
 - Work Skills Traineeships.



Focusing on the retention of **all students requires supporting those with complex needs or challenging behaviours.**

Early warning signs and early interventions

Researchers agree that the early identification and intervention for children and young people at risk of disengagement is the most effective approach to supporting their wellbeing and success (see Cuhna & Hedeman (2006) for example).

Effective schools use a range of data to monitor students to identify early warning signs. Where there are behaviours that are accounted for as a disability, the Disability Standards for Educators apply.

Some early signs may include:

- ▶ sudden changes or ongoing negative patterns in behaviour (A-E, suspensions, incidents)
- ▶ disruption to the learning of others
- ▶ lack of self awareness or self management
- ▶ lack of social management skills or social awareness
- ▶ bullying or being bullied
- ▶ mental health issues
- ▶ poor attendance
- ▶ family issues
- ▶ housing insecurity.

Before transitioning a student to alternative settings

Before considering the transition of a student to an alternative setting, professional conversations occur with the principal, classroom teachers, behaviour support teacher and/or guidance officer and other relevant staff. Ongoing consultation with parents is essential. The joint analysis should confirm that the student displays a range of behaviours that interfere with their ability to learn in mainstream settings and that may put them at risk of disengaging from school.

An alternative setting is most likely to be effective where there is a consensus among parents, staff and the student that an alternative setting will provide the student with the best chance of success.

Make in-school adjustments

Once the principal confirms that a student exhibits behaviours or is affected by other circumstances that impede learning, the school should make adjustments to support that student's ability to learn. We expect that schools will have considered a range of contextual factors and used many of the following actions before contemplating the use of an alternative education setting.

Where substantial in-school adjustments have not been made, state school principals are encouraged to consult with their assistant regional director or principal supervisor prior to making a decision to transition a student to an alternative setting, particularly where the evidence is not sufficient or compelling.

Reasonable action	Y/N	Comments
Consulted with student's parents/carers		
Made adjustments and taken action in response to consultation with parents/carers		
Examined issues of concern		
Identified target behaviours		
Undertaken a Functional Behaviour Assessment		
Developed an individual behaviour support plan or a discipline improvement plan based on Functional Behaviour Assessment		
Assigned a case manager to the student		
Worked with the classroom teacher/s to develop different approaches to managing challenging behaviours		
Determined if short- or long-term educational and behavioural support is required to strengthen student participation at school		
Used specialist teachers/guidance officer/school staff to assist the student		
Provided differentiated classroom learning to respond to the learning needs of the student		

Reasonable action	Y/N	Comments
Implemented personalised learning plans in response to the skills, knowledge and understanding of the student		
Implemented flexible arrangements for the student's educational program. This may include more individualised tuition etc.		
Conducted an audit of classroom practices		
Used flexible approaches, for example, greater timetabling flexibility and a wide range of programs and educational options		
Developed an individual attendance improvement plan to retain the student at school		

Additional considerations	Y/N	Comments
Reasonable action has modified student behaviour		
Relocation implications for student and parents/ carers		
Social and emotional implication for student		
Required intervention is beyond the capacity of the school		
Suitability for an alternative education setting		

Holistic reflection

Schools now reflect on the student's response to the reasonable actions and adjustments the school has made.

If the student has not exhibited a significant improvement in their engagement, the principal may consider transitioning the student to an alternative education setting.

When a student is referred to an alternative setting

Steps for the referring school

The school delegate determines whether an alternative setting is appropriate for the student, with the approval of the principal. This includes careful consideration of issues such as the age of the student, as well as their academic, social and emotional needs.

Determination – referring school principal	Y/N	Comments
Consult and engage the young person and explain what in-school adjustments have occurred and why an alternative setting is being considered		
Discuss with the alternative setting, the young person's suitability to the new environment		
Discuss short- or long-term placement in the alternative setting, including a commitment to accept the student's reintegration into the mainstream school, and commitment to fixed review periods to consider the student's readiness for reintegration		
Consult and engage with student's parents/carers		
Consider the relocation implications on both the student and the family (for example, transport)		
Provide student transfer note*		
Exchange other information between referring school and destination school such as conversations between guidance officers and youth workers		
Determination — alternative school principal [#]	Y/N	Comments
Assess whether the curriculum suits the student's needs and provides them with pathways towards reintegration with mainstream education, further education, training or employment		
Consult and engage with the student		
Consult and engage with student's parents/carers		
Share student progression with mainstream school at agreed levels		
Request a student transfer note* on enrolment if not accessible in OneSchool		
Exchange other information between referring school and destination school such as conversations between guidance officers and youth workers		

*If transitioning between a state and non-state school. [#]Or other decision-maker if non-school setting.

What does a high-quality alternative setting look like?

Second chance school does not have to be second best. High-quality alternative settings strive to deliver exemplary services that meet or exceed all of the below quality standards.



Holding explicit high expectations and aspirations for every student



Implementing quality and contemporary teaching practices with differentiated and individualised education programs



Working with other schools and education providers to maximise the opportunities and pathways available to students



Ensuring broad curriculum offerings, providing every young person a breadth of opportunities, based on the Australian Curriculum or ACARA accredited programs



Utilising robust wellbeing measurement tools to measure and evaluate the overall wellbeing of the student cohort



Monitoring individual student learning progress throughout each term, through a mix of formative assessment and benchmark measures



Monitoring individual and whole-school data to measure and plan for targeted initiatives and strategies



Offering multiple certification options to cater for the learning potential of all students including QCE, VET qualifications and higher education pathways



Offering students opportunities to participate in NAPLAN and other benchmark testing



Providing expert guidance, career advice and further education transition support



Participating in proactive self-review and continuous improvement planning



Developing a strong school culture, with a focus on positive relationships and relational pedagogy



Working with families and other significant adults to support every student to succeed

Evaluation

It is important to collect and use reliable evidence to inform decision making.

Education settings should implement a plan to collect, analyse and discuss data on academic outcomes, attendance, behaviour and student wellbeing for both formative and summative purposes. Together this data provides:

- ▶ an overview of the progress of individual students, priority cohorts, whole-school and system levels
- ▶ insights into the academic, social and behavioural needs of students
- ▶ insights into the effectiveness of specific approaches.

Success measures for evaluating outcomes of alternative settings

The Department of Education has established a clear key performance indicator framework for early childhood and school settings. This framework includes indicators that cascade at the provider, regional and central office level.

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) has also developed *An Outcomes Framework for Queensland Independent Special Assistance Schools*, which is available to all member schools.

High expectations for students, in terms of strong academic gain and learning, and strong transitions, are a key attribute for all school environments, including flexible and alternative education settings. These important outcomes should be measured.

Changes in wellbeing can also provide important insights into student progress. Wellbeing data often require subjective and qualitative judgments to be made by personnel on the effectiveness of their program, in line with the Department of Education's standards of evidence.

The following measures provide an overview for a wide range of data to describe the outcomes of an alternative setting. In isolation, no one set of data provides a rigorous picture of outcomes for students. However, the multiple measures of success we are proposing present a robust overview of the outcomes that an educational setting can deliver for its students.

The use of current and accurate data to measure the success of alternative settings is necessary to achieve valid results.

Achieving a balanced view of success

The Department of Education is proposing five measures for evaluating the success of alternative settings, noting that wellbeing is a new measure, underlining its importance to a student's engagement and success in learning.

These measures need to be interpreted as a whole. Each data set works together to provide a holistic picture of distance travelled in the wellbeing, learning and transitions of individual students, as well as overall outcomes for the school.

The Department of Education is continuing to develop and assess tools to assist in evaluating alternative settings. While the use of these measures is not mandated, the measures are designed as a mechanism for schools to reflect on student improvement in a holistic way.

Measures of success in alternative settings

Engagement	<p>Engagement data should be read in conjunction with a range of other indicators. For example, what is the relative gain in other areas? What was the wellbeing of the student when they were enrolled? What is the wellbeing of the student now? How does this relate to attendance and school disciplinary absences?</p> <p>Engagement data includes A-E behaviour, SDAs, attendance and real retention.</p>
Achievement and learning	<p>Student academic achievement and learning is a key outcome for any school. For some individual students and cohorts, wellbeing data can provide an important context for judgments about their learning. The goal of the school would be to view distance travelled in wellbeing and academic gain over time.</p>
Destinations	<p>Strong student transitions are a key goal for all schools, and student destinations provide an indication of how schools support their students to succeed. For our most at-risk students, an integrated picture of the wellbeing, achievement and learning needs to be taken into account when making a judgment about the destinations of students.</p>
Quality and satisfaction	<p>Satisfaction of parents and students is an important indicator of the performance of a school. Satisfaction cannot stand alone as the only measure of outcomes — but should be considered in conjunction with other indicators.</p>
Wellbeing	<p>Learning and engagement may not occur where a student is experiencing significant physical, emotional or social barriers. Many young people require multidisciplinary support, and schools can play an important supporting role. Distance travelled in wellbeing (which can include resilience, academic self-concept and perseverance) is an important indicator of outcomes, however, it is not the sole measure of school outcomes.</p>

Potential data sources for evaluating engagement outcomes

These data sources apply to all settings including alternative arrangements inside schools, as well as in non-mainstream settings (e.g. special assistance schools and positive learning centres).

Measure	Aggregated data (pending age of cohort)	Reliability of data	
Engagement			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ % attendance▶ % <85% attendance▶ Rate of suspensions, exclusions and cancellations▶ A - E behaviour▶ Real retention to Year 12.	OneSchool or non-state school records	Strong	Systemic data
Achievement			
Distance travelled per semester in English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy	A-E results	Moderate – strong	Subjective analysis using consistent criteria
	Norm-based test instruments such as PAT-M, PAT-R	Strong	Norm-based and objective when administered with rigour
	NAPLAN	Strong	Objective
Year 12 outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ % QCE or QCIA % QCE, IBD, VET or QCIA S▶ % Cert II or above▶ % non-OP 1–15 & Cert III or above	Year 12 results	Strong	Systematic data
Achievement of VET qualifications	Certification	Strong	Australian Qualifications Framework

Measure	Aggregated data (pending age of cohort)	Reliability of data	
Achievement			
Destination to: ▶ mainstream school ▶ further education, training or employment	Record of destination	Moderate	Destination may be temporary
	Next Steps reports for early leavers and Year 12 completers	Moderate – strong	High-quality survey, but sample size may be too small in alternative settings
Quality and satisfaction			
Parent and student satisfaction	School opinion surveys Targeted surveys	Weak – moderate	Sample sizes too small in alternative settings
Wellbeing			
Wellbeing measured by a purpose designed tool	For example, wellbeing reported by student through survey tool	Moderate – strong	Tool completed by parents or students can provide clear indications of relative gain achieved
	For example, wellbeing measured by the engagement matrix provided at: https://dlb.sa.edu.au/ctmoodle/pluginfile.php/3233/mod_resource/content/6/student_engagement_matrix_guidelines.pdf	Moderate – strong	Clear indicators can provide a strong frame for measuring relative gain achieved While there are clear descriptors, checklist can be subjective. Method would need to be developed to aggregate individual data
Wellbeing measured by overall data on attendance, achievement, destination, quality and satisfaction		Moderate – strong depending on combination of data	Multiple sets of data provide a comprehensive account of outcomes

Our system: Roles and Responsibilities

Strong governance is a vital component of a responsive and effective education and training system. An effective governance system ensures accountability and transparency through:

- ▶ clear roles and responsibilities
- ▶ targeted responses at every level
- ▶ effective collaboration.

Whole of government

The Queensland Government fosters a shared vision for maximum engagement of children and young people in education or training, and will:

- ▶ collaborate to ensure all relevant government agencies who work with children and young people adopt a coordinated approach to youth engagement
- ▶ support the Youth Engagement Alliance — a forum for Queensland Government agencies, schooling sectors and other stakeholders to partner in our efforts to improve the re-engagement of young Queenslanders in education, training or employment. Visit www.qld.gov.au/youthengagementalliance.

The Department of Education

The Department of Education sets the overarching policy for engagement in education and training, allocates resources, and monitors outcomes, and will:

- ▶ work with other agencies, community-based organisations, special assistance schools and other stakeholders at a system-wide level to remove any barriers to collaboration
- ▶ ensure policies, procedures, OneSchool and other resources support regions and schools to support all students
- ▶ support consistent and objective evaluation of alternative approaches to inform future investment
- ▶ ensure that resourcing mechanisms recognise the role that schools and regions play in maximising engagement and re-engagement.

Regional directors and regional Department of Education teams

Regional directors and regional Department of Education teams support the effective implementation of education and training programs and services at a local level, and will:

- ▶ ensure schools retain and deliver high-quality programs that maximise all student outcomes
- ▶ consider school and regional data, including the complete picture provided by combined retention, suspension, A to E behaviour, exclusion and cancellation data
- ▶ work collaboratively to support the provision of high-quality responses to children and young people at risk of disengaging from education in their region
- ▶ identify and address disengagement where it is prevalent
- ▶ support ongoing liaison with relevant agencies and other stakeholders
- ▶ work with schools (including, where appropriate, non-state schools) to support better networking of resources
- ▶ ensure all regional staff, (such as assistant regional directors, senior guidance officers, and regional youth support coordinators) play a role in supporting engagement and re-engagement of children and young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement.
- ▶ lead a regional Youth Engagement Hub
- ▶ approve new alternative settings mainstream schools
- ▶ foster collaboration with other government agencies to ensure multidisciplinary approaches
- ▶ support the inclusion of the vast majority of students in mainstream state schools.

Schools and school leaders

Schools and school leaders provide high-quality services for children and young people, and will:

- ▶ lead safe, supportive and inclusive state schooling with high-quality engagement opportunities and appropriate intervention
- ▶ collaborate as part of a network of schools to share resources and learnings
- ▶ take responsibility for retention, exclusion, suspension and cancellation data
- ▶ show extreme vigilance when deciding to move students out of mainstream settings
- ▶ support every early leaver to make a strong transition to an eligible option
- ▶ give careful consideration to offering tailored, in-school approaches to meet the needs of their most at-risk students
- ▶ consider relevant legislative obligations when enrolling students who have become disengaged
- ▶ marshal existing school resources to deliver outcomes for all enrolled students, including students who are at risk of disengaging or who are disengaged
- ▶ recognise their responsibility for 'passing the baton' when they make a decision to move their student into an alternative education setting
- ▶ recognise their role as a leader within a community of schools and work with school networks to find ways of using resources to meet the needs of their most at-risk and disengaged students and, where possible, disconnected students
- ▶ recognise and actively support other agencies that may be involved in the lives of some young people.

What is a regional Youth Engagement Hub?

A Youth Engagement Hub is the system established by each regional director to support youth engagement and re-engagement in their region.

The Youth Engagement Hubs support regional directors with the authority and structures to lead engagement and re-engagement in their region by:

- ▶ actively identifying young people who are disengaged, and supporting them to reconnect with education, employment or training
- ▶ support assistant regional directors, guidance officers and other relevant leaders, who ensure mainstream schools retain the vast majority of students
- ▶ building collaborative capability, including with partner agencies
- ▶ supporting evidence-based decision making.

Regional Youth Engagement Hubs complement the significant achievements of state schools in providing safe, supportive and inclusive schools that deliver outcomes for every student. Youth Engagement Hubs are designed by regional directors. They will not be uniform across the state. They will be designed to meet the unique geographic and demographic context of each region.

Youth Engagement Hubs are not necessarily a physical location. They *may*:

- ▶ be established as teams in regional offices, schools or other settings, in virtual settings, or a combination of both
- ▶ consist of a single hub or a network of hubs throughout regions
- ▶ include external agents (for example, community-based organisations, special assistance schools, other government agencies) or co-opt this collaboration as required.

Simple Interest

Formula: $I = \frac{Prt}{100}$

P = Principal amount
 r = rate as percentage
 t = time in years

Example: If \$1000 is invested at 4% per year, how much interest will it earn after 4 years?

$$I = \frac{1000 \times 4 \times 4}{100}$$

$$= \frac{16000}{100}$$

$$= 160$$

2k

Strong responses

to students who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement

Alignment with the National School Improvement Tool

All schooling sectors aim to achieve high-quality outcomes for their students. There is a good deal of research on what works in schools, including high-quality mainstream schools, as well as other alternative settings such as special assistance schools, flexi-schools, positive learning centres and other approaches.

Based on this research, the National School Improvement Tool (www.acer.org/files/NSIT.pdf) provides an overview of what works to drive school improvement. This research provides an important touchstone for all school settings, including alternative settings.

1. Explicit improvement agenda

The school leadership team or governing body have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, including those students who are most at risk. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement in engagement for all students have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.

Like all schools, alternative settings are determined to continuously focus on improvement. Second chance schools do not have to be “second best”.

High aspirations for all students are at the centre of successful and inclusive schools. Research points to the key role played by aspirations and the need to create a climate of achievement through effective leadership and a high level of teacher commitment and expectations for student learning for all students (Lamb & Rice, 2008).

With respect to improving school engagement and completion for at-risk students, “the elements of school culture central to maximising student engagement and retention include ... a drive for continuous improvement.” (McGregor, Mills & Thomson, 2012).

2. Analysis and discussion of data

A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, retention of students to Year 12, student wellbeing, and post-school destinations. Data analyses consider overall school performance, as well as the performances of students who are highly at risk of disengaging; evidence of improvement/regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests, measures of growth across the years of school.

Inclusive and alternative settings focus on achieving outcomes for their students. They pay attention to academic, attendance, behavioural, wellbeing, retention and transition data. This can support identification of early warning signs and inform timely intervention. Well-compiled data also improves the understanding of the individual student's progress and future needs, and provides insights into the effectiveness of programs and approaches across the student cohort (see, for example, McGregor & Mills, 2012).

All school (alternative and mainstream) settings consider each of these datasets separately and together in order to gather insights into student gains, and into areas where there is room for improvement.

3. A culture that promotes learning

The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. This explicitly includes students who are most at risk of disengaging and their parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders, and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing, including parents who experience challenges engaging with schools. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant and inclusive, and that promotes intellectual rigour.

4. Targeted use of school resources

The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual students.

Research shows that students, particularly students who are disengaging, need more individualised attention at school. Teaching strategies, classroom environments and wrap-around support differ according to the circumstances of the at-risk student. The most effective education settings recognise the need to apply their resources appropriately to best meet the learning and wellbeing needs of students. School staff work in multidisciplinary teams to support at risk students, rather than operating in silos (see, for example, Lamb & Rice, 2008).

A wide range of researchers report on the importance of providing disengaged and students at risk of disengaging with supportive environments that combine a focus on wellbeing with a focus on learning. "Unless the former are being addressed, the latter will not happen" (Wierenga & Taylor, 2015, p. 18).

5. An expert teaching team

The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to develop a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements. Expert teams know how to build wellbeing and learning at the same time. This includes building learning stamina, concentration, metacognition as well as resilience and wellbeing.

Research points to the vital role that "the right kind of teacher" plays in meeting the needs of all students, particularly those who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement.

6. Systematic curriculum delivery

The school has a coherent plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan reflects high expectations for all students, and provides opportunities for all students to access the Australian Curriculum. The plan comprises evidence-based teaching practices aligned with assessment and reporting procedures and has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curricula and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and families.

Research suggests that diverse and flexible curriculum offerings are essential for student engagement and retention in alternative settings.

“For school programs to engage learners, they need to be challenging, stimulating, involve opportunities for sharing learning tasks, be satisfying as learning experiences, and have clear and demonstrable benefits beyond school.” (Lamb et al., 2004).

7. Differentiated teaching and learning

The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in its day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including students who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging.

Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individual students, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to different levels of readiness and need.

Like all students, children and young people at risk have a wide variety of different learning needs, interests and learning preferences. Effective teachers have clear academic standards and high expectations for their students at risk of disengaging. They provide appropriate scaffolding to support students in their learning and flexible and individualised support (see, for example, Te Riele, 2014).

8. Effective pedagogical practices

The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. This is particularly so for students who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods, including explicit instruction, to maximise student learning.

Children and young people who are at risk of disengagement benefit from clarity about what they are expected to learn, individualised attention to support them to learn, and timely feedback. The highly effective teacher will customise instructional approaches to suit the learning needs of the student, while at the same time using evidence-based teaching strategies that work (Lamb & Rice, 2008).

9. School–community partnerships

The school seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children’s education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual or physical resources not available within the school.

All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. There are procedures to ensure effective communications, and to monitor and evaluate the intended impacts of the school’s partnerships.

Students who are at risk of disengagement often face complex and multiple barriers. Respectful and authentic engagement with their parents and carers can be profoundly effective in supporting vulnerable children and young people and their families, and in maintaining student engagement.

A shared commitment

Every child and young person deserves the chance to succeed. This document outlines a range of evidence-based approaches to support Queensland state schools, Department of Education regional staff, and other stakeholders in their delivery of a strong and inclusive education and training system.

We will continue to develop tools to foster a spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility across the sector in supporting all Queensland children and young people to fulfil their potential.



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