

Making every day count

Case study two

2

Far North Queensland primary school

- 350 students
- 60% Indigenous students
- 50% English as an additional language or dialect
- Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value – approximately 800, with 90% of students in bottom and bottom middle quartiles

1. Develop a positive school culture

Celebrate cultural diversity

Recognise the diversity of cultures through special events.

Parent and community engagement

Link with the local university for students to visit and become familiar with the campus.

Have an 'open door' policy for all classrooms.

"They (the teachers) take the time and say, 'You can stay if you want. You can spend time this afternoon.'" (Parent)



"We celebrate NAIDOC day at the school ... the word went out on the street ... we ran out of chairs in the hall ... it was acknowledging culture. There was a lot of pride in the room." (Principal)

3. Record and follow-up student absences

Teachers contact parents seeking an explanation for unexplained absences.



"Other schools I have been at, it's an office person's job. At our school, the teachers are responsible for contacting parents and getting reasons for absences." (Teacher)

2. Communicate high expectations of attendance

Set high expectations of all students

Keep students aware of their attendance rates and the impacts of absenteeism.

"In our morning routines, we talk about attendance every day." (Teacher)

Establish and publicise an attendance target and publicly report progress towards that target

Recognise the role the community can play in helping the school to improve attendance. Use Facebook to communicate weekly attendance figures by class, and highlight and congratulate classes with attendance above 90%.



"It's always in the newsletter, every day on parade, on school posters and Facebook" (Parent)

4. Monitor student non-attendance

Attendance data is monitored

Use the OneSchool attendance monitoring dashboard to analyse attendance and absence information.

Define chronic absenteeism as attendance less than 85% for this school. Use the attendance dashboard data to categorise students into tiers for monitoring and follow-up.

"We have our tier 1 kids that are away occasionally and just need tracking, then we have our tier 2 kids, the ones who are in the 86% to 89%, and then we have our tier 3 kids – 85% and under." (Principal)

5. Provide intervention and support

Clear leadership

Select an experienced teacher to champion the process of monitoring and improving student attendance – known as the Head of Enrolment, Attendance, Retention and Transition (HEART).

Address barriers to getting to school

Provide a 'walking bus' to encourage students to walk to school under supervision making school transport easier for parents.

"There's a big park in the centre of the community. At 8 o'clock, the teacher aide/community liaison officer stands there and blows the whistle. The kids come running. As the teacher is walking along the street, she blows the whistle and the kids come out and join the walk to school". (HEART)



"We understand at the end of the fortnight, money is a bit tight. We have a breakfast program. It's there every day. There's no shame" (Principal)

