

Making every day count

Fact sheet: A model for making every day count

Schools should consider the following model to improve student attendance. It is based on the University of Queensland's research report, *Making Every Day Count: Effective strategies to improve student attendance in Queensland state schools* (June 2017) and [Every Day Counts](#).



1. Develop common terminology

- Provide clarity regarding what constitutes a reasonable excuse for an absence (e.g. being ill).
- Set school attendance targets appropriate to the local context.



2. Develop a comprehensive approach

Step 1: develop a positive school culture

- Make the school a safe and welcoming place to be.
- Promote, encourage and support positive relationships between students and between students and teachers.
- Respect cultural diversity and employ culturally appropriate practices (e.g. recognise cultural events, understand the importance of sorry business).
- Employ culturally diverse staff to assist with family liaison.
- Welcome relevant cultural organisations to work with students.
- Build bridges between school and home, and between school and the community.

Step 3: record and follow-up student absences

- Ensure rolls are marked daily.
- Notify parents of an unexplained absence on the day of the absence.
- Follow up unexplained absences with parents.
- Consider the use of sanctions (e.g. detention, withholding privileges, cancellation of enrolment) in relation to student absences that are not deemed to be reasonable. Only use sanctions as part of a suite of measures to address attendance issues.

Step 5: provide intervention and support

- Clear the path for learning by taking actions that support students to attend school.
- Remove barriers to attendance by ensuring students have transport options for getting to school, access to food, uniforms and materials to enable them to fit in with their peers, flexible timetabling and deadlines for submission of assignments.
- Put structures in place to support attendance (e.g. breakfast club, creche, outside hours school care).
- Establish a range of supports for students with, or at risk of, low attendance. This could range from mentoring programs to individual case management (e.g. involving guidance officers, student welfare workers, external agencies).
- Make students feel like they are wanted at school and that support is available to them.



3. Make every day in the classroom count

- Strive to make each classroom a place where students want to be. Not because of external rewards or the threat of sanctions, but because they are places where their imagination is ignited and their thirst for knowledge is satisfied.
- The most important contribution that schools can make to enhancing student attendance is to provide a curriculum that is meaningful to students and pedagogical practices that are engaging and challenging.



Step 2: communicate high expectations of attendance

- Set high expectations for all students.
- Communicate these expectations to students, parents, staff and the school community when and where possible.
- Take into account the social context in which students are living, their personal circumstances and how the school is affecting attendance, both positively and negatively.
- Consider the use of awards and celebrations. Be aware of the impact they may have on students who are unlikely to ever receive their benefits (e.g. students affected by illness or family issues) and implement them appropriately.

Step 4: monitor student non-attendance

- Understand the data—identify low attendance at an individual, class, year, and school level, and track these over time. Involve students and parents in this process.

