Spotlight

Attendance matters

Contents

Teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement (Hattie, 2009).

However, the relationship between teacher quality and student achievement is mediated by the amount of time students spend in the classroom. Irrespective of the reasons for absences, non-attendance affects student outcomes.

In the 2013 National Education Reform Agreement, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) set national targets for school attendance as a way to monitor the extent to which all school children are engaged in and benefitting from formal schooling, recognising that, alongside engagement in the classroom, improving attendance rates is a critical step in closing the gaps in educational outcomes for disadvantaged students.

This was reconfirmed by all commonwealth, state and territory governments in the 2018 National Schools Reform Agreement, which re-stated the goal to improve student engagement, evidenced through increasing "the proportion of students attending school to 90 per cent or more of the time, including students from priority equity cohorts" (Council of Australian Governments, 2018).

However, research has demonstrated that boosting attendance, especially in educationally vulnerable groups, is challenging. This historical intractability should not stop efforts to increase attendance rates as there are a range of promising strategies that may be able to help address the issue.

Improving attendance requires a deep appreciation of the complex and myriad factors that influence student, family and community engagement. Understanding the relationship between attendance and achievement can help teachers, school leaders, parents, and school communities create welcoming school environments, promote positive attendance habits and tailor early and individualised interventions to address problematic absenteeism.

At a glance

- While the Australian attendance rate is 92%, the attendance level is 75%.

Australian attendance data

The overall school attendance picture in Australia is good. Year 1-10 students attend, on average, 92% of 'available school days' in Australia (ACARA, 2018).

The overall proportion of Australian students who attend school regularly is also good, with 75% of Years 1-10 students attending at least 90% of available school days (ACARA, 2018).

Australia's school attendance rate is comparable to other countries with high performing education systems. For example, in 2016/2017 the overall attendance rate in state-funded schools in England was 95.3% (Department for Education, 2018).

There are, however, areas of concern:

- 25% of Australian school students attend less than 90% of school days – this equates to approximately 20 or more days absent in a school year

- attendance rates tend to decline in secondary school, from Year 8 onwards

- there is a notable attendance gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, as well as between students from metropolitan and remote locations.

Almost a quarter of students miss at least a month of school

Most Australian students attend school regularly, with 75% of Year 1-10 students attending at least 90% of school days in 2018 (Figure 1). However, a closer look at this data indicates something concerning. If 75% of students attend at least 90% of the time then the reverse suggests that 25% (1 in 4) Australian students were absent for more than 10% of school time, or 20 or more days. These students are missing at least a month of school over the schooling year.

This is particularly pronounced in certain groups of students. Students in the early years of compulsory schooling, students transitioning through secondary school, students in remote locations or socio-economically disadvantaged areas and Indigenous students are most at risk for this kind of absence (ACARA, 2018; Hancock, Shepherd, Lawrence, & Zubrick, 2013).
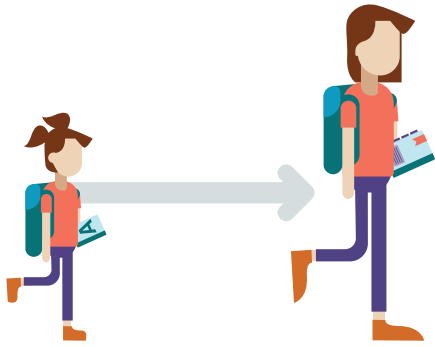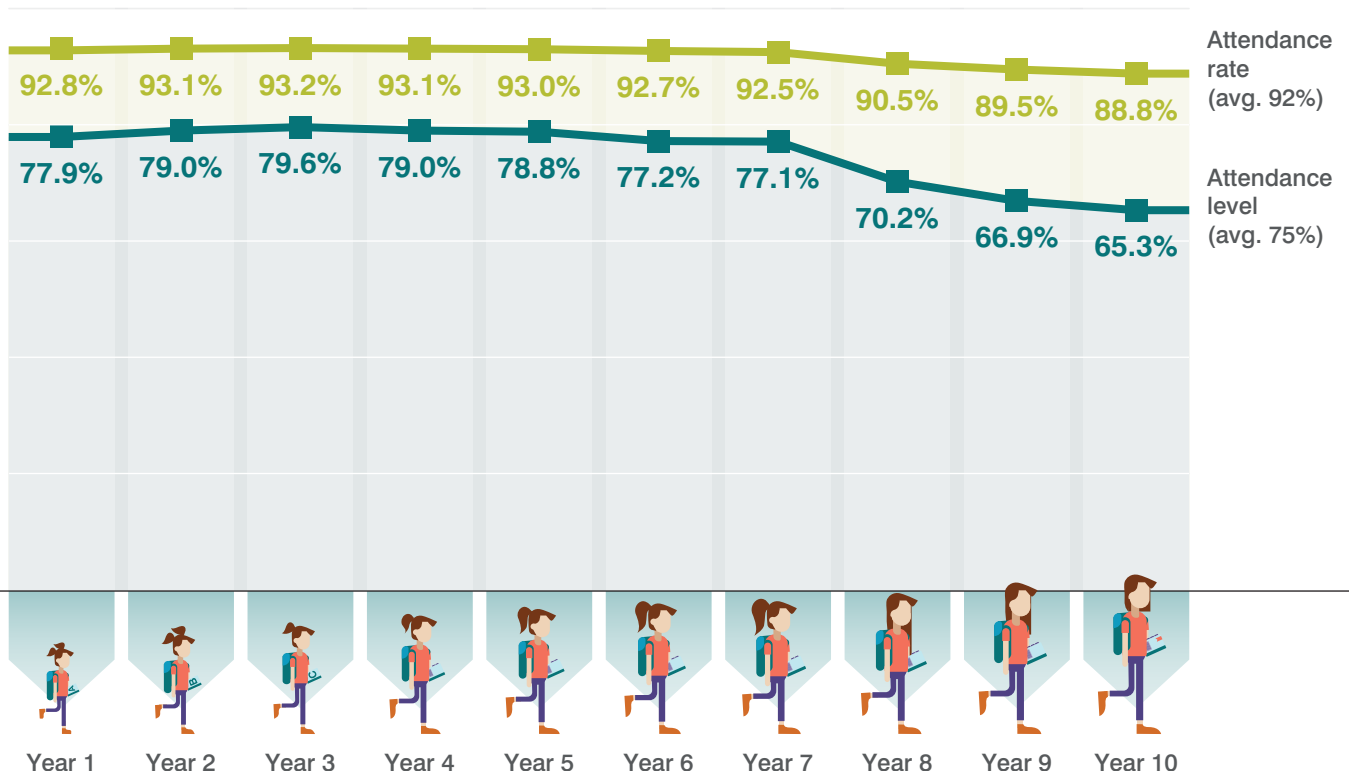
Attendance trends across the schooling journey

Attendance numbers vary across the years of schooling. For example, of the primary school years, attendance levels are lower in Year 1, that in Years 2-5, with 22.1% of Year 1 students or 70,000 students missing one month or more in 2018 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018).[2]

From Year 3 to Year 10, Australian schools experience a drop in attendance as students advance through the years, a trend that is well documented across many other countries as well, including the USA and the UK (Gottfried, 2009; Hancock et al., 2013).

The biggest drops occur between Years 7 and 10, where there is a 3.7% point drop in the national average attendance rate from 92.5% to 88.8%. This means around 69,000 Year 7 students and 97,000 Year 10 students missed at least 10% of school in 2017 (ACARA, 2018; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018).[3]

Figure 1

Australian attendance rates and attendance levels (proportion 90% and above) by year of schooling, 2018.[1]

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Attendance rate (avg. 92%)	92.8%	93.1%	93.2%	93.1%	93.0%	92.7%	92.5%	90.5%	89.5%	88.8%
Attendance level (avg. 75%)	77.9%	79.0%	79.6%	79.0%	78.8%	77.2%	77.1%	70.2%	66.9%	65.3%

[1] Source: http://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/student-attendance

[2] There were 314,817 full time equivalent year 1 students in Australia, in 2018. The majority, (77.9%, 245,242) attended at least 90% of school days. Almost 1 in 4 (22.1%, 69,575) did not. Data source: ABS 4221.0 Schools Australia, 2018

[3] There were 299,392 full time equivalent year 7 students in Australia, in 2018. The majority, (77.1%, 230,831) attended at least 90% of possible school days. Almost 1 in 4 (23%, 68,561) did not. There were 280,884 full time equivalent year 10 students in Australia, in 2018. The majority, (65.3%, 183,417) attended at least 90% of possible school days. Around one third (34.7%, 97,467) did not. Data source: ABS 4221.0 Schools Australia, 2018

The effect of geolocation

In 2018, only 27.1% of junior secondary students in very remote schools attended at least 90% of all school days, compared to 72.6% of junior secondary students in major cities.

Remoteness is a particular challenge for Australian education. Unsurprisingly, as geographical remoteness increases, school attendance declines. Students in both primary and secondary school in remote and very remote locations have considerably lower attendance rates and levels of attendance than students in major cities or regional areas.

- Overall, across Years 1-10, there was a 20.6% gap in attendance rates between students in major cities (92.6%) and students in very remote areas (72.0%; Figure 2).

- This gap was most pronounced in Year 7-10 students. In very remote schools, students attended an average of 63% of school days compared to 91.3% in metropolitan schools – a gap of 28.3%.

Figure 2

Australian attendance rates by geolocation, 2018.[4]

Legend: ■ Years 1-6 ■ Years 7-10 ■ Years 1-10

Geolocation	Years 1-6	Years 7-10	Years 1-10
Major Cities	93.5%	91.3%	92.6%
Inner Regional	92.7%	89.1%	91.2%
Outer Regional	91.8%	88.2%	90.4%
Remote	89.1%	82.6%	86.9%
Very Remote	76.1%	63.0%	72.0%

[4] Source: http://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/student-attendance

At a glance

- Across Years 1-10, 48.7% of Indigenous students attend at least 90% of school days compared to 76.8% of non-Indigenous students.

- Around 6% of Australian school students identify as from Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander heritage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

The gap in school attendance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Australia is substantial, and was one of the Closing the Gap targets agreed in 2014 by COAG (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015). In 2018, the overall national Indigenous attendance rate was 82.3% compared to 92.5% for non-Indigenous students. This gap of approximately 10.2% points across Years 1-10 has not improved since 2014 (ACARA, 2018).[5] Overall, across Years 1-10, 51.3% of Indigenous students miss a month or more of school. This gap in attendance is persistent regardless of location. However, the increasing disparity by Year 10 is most critical in remote and very remote locations.

- In major cities in 2018, the attendance level in Year 10 was 69% for non-Indigenous students and 40% for Indigenous students (Figure 3)

- In very remote locations only 1 in 4 Indigenous students (25%) attended primary school regularly in 2018 (Figure 3)

- By Year 10 the attendance level for non-Indigenous children in remote locations was only 51%, in 2018. However, the attendance level for Indigenous children in remote locations was only 13% (Figure 3).

The complexity of the unique circumstances and factors influencing attendance levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students warrants further discussion which is outside of the scope of this spotlight.

Figure 3

Australian attendance levels (proportion 90% and above), by geolocation (major cities and very remote) and Indigenous status, 2018.[6]
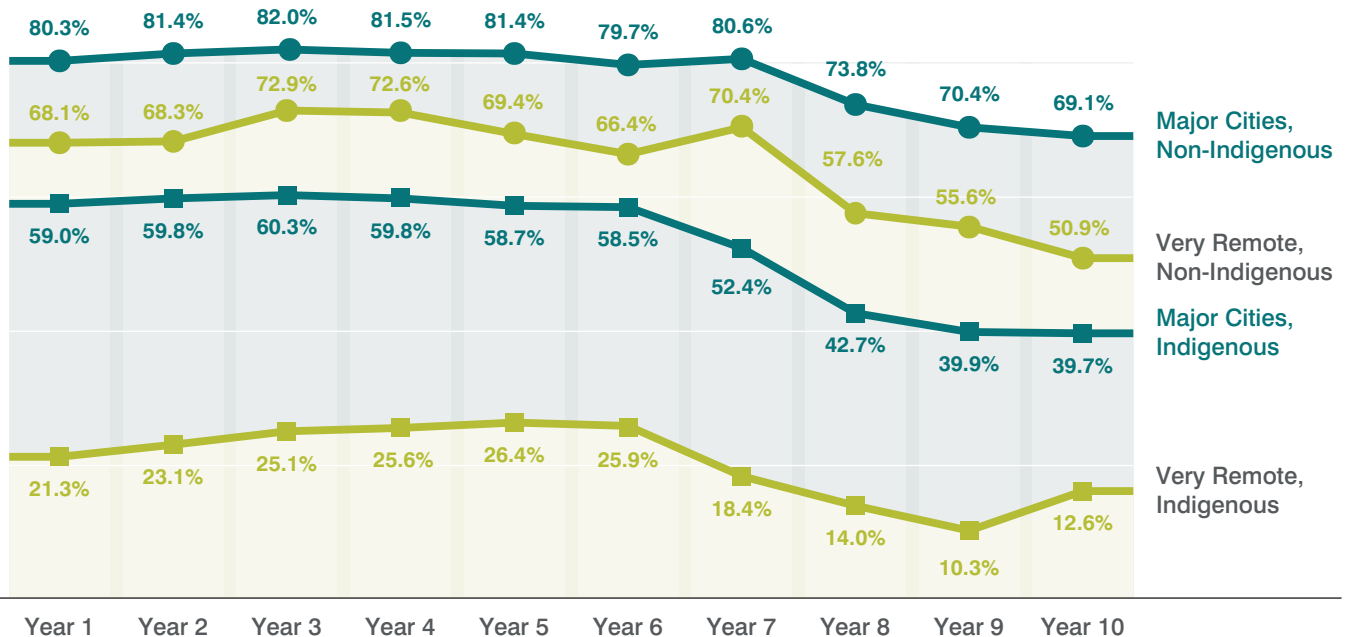
[5] There is no nationally comparable attendance data available earlier than 2014 (ACARA, 2018)

[6] Source: http://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/student-attendance

Achievement declines are associated with any level of absence – 'every day counts' (Hancock et al., 2013).

Impacts of non-attendance

Non-attendance has a variety of effects on students, both academically and socially. Absenteeism can increase social isolation, including alienation and lack of engagement with the school community and peers, leading to emotional and behavioural difficulties (Carroll, 2013; Gottfried, 2014). It is also associated with an increased likelihood of drop-out (Keppens & Spruyt, 2017; London, Sanchez, Castrechini, & Castrechini, 2016).

There are a variety of interrelated factors that influence attendance rates. Some factors are school-related while others relate to individual and family contexts. Critically, the evidence suggests that early attendance and declining attendance habits from primary to secondary school have important ramifications for later years of schooling and student outcomes.

Hancock et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between Australian student attendance and achievement across the NAPLAN domains of numeracy, reading and writing, across various school (e.g. school SES and school remoteness), individual and carer characteristics. They found a number of key insights about non-attendance.

Every day counts

"Every day counts and there is no 'safe' threshold for absences"

– Hancock et al., 2013

There are many factors that influence student achievement, including teacher quality and student engagement. Attendance is also an important contributor to a student's academic achievement – all school days matter. The correlation between absence and achievement is consistently negative and declines in achievement are evident with any level of absence. Although authorised absences and smaller amounts of absence were associated with only small declines in achievement, all absences count, and the impact of absence increases with the number of absences (Hancock et al., 2013).

At a glance

While all absences have a negative impact, greater declines in student achievement are associated with

- Unauthorised absences

- Chronic absenteeism.

Absence type effects impact

"Not all absences are equal when it comes to student outcomes"
– Hancock, Gottfried, & Zubrick, 2018

'Authorised' absences typically have parent-approved explanations that schools find acceptable. For example, illness, medical/health care appointments, religious or cultural activities, suspension from school, family holidays or bereavement (ACARA, 2015b). 'Unauthorised' absences occur when a school either does not receive an explanation or where the explanation given is deemed unacceptable by the school/school principal; for example in the case of truancy (ACARA, 2015b).

Unauthorised absences are typically associated with larger declines in student achievement (Gershenson, Jacknowitz, & Brannegan, 2017; Gottfried, 2009; Hancock et al., 2013; Zubrick, 2014). Although a smaller proportion of students have unauthorised absences, unauthorised absences have a more negative effect on student achievement than authorised absences. For example, Hancock et al. found that students with more than 20% authorised absences (up to 40 authorised full day absences per year) and no unauthorised absences, still achieved higher at the Year 5 level on the numeracy domain than students with 5% unauthorised absences (up to 10 unauthorised full day absences per year).

It is likely that co-varying factors influence the academic achievement of students who are likely to have unauthorised absences. Factors such as socioeconomic or Indigenous status and education level of parent/caregiver and mobility (students who have enrolled in multiple schools throughout the school year) have a stronger impact on achievement than attendance (Hancock, Lawrence, Shepherd, Mitrou, & Zubrick, 2017; Hancock et al., 2013). Additionally, it is possible that authorised absences have less of an effect on student academic achievement because students who are absent due to illness or other excused reasons, such as family holidays, are appropriately assisted, either at home or at school, to 'catch-up' (Hancock et al., 2018).

At a glance

The effects of non-attendance on achievement:

- accumulate over time

- can affect academic achievement in future years of schooling.

The impacts of absenteeism are cumulative

"The effects of non-attendance on achievement are cumulative and can impact both academic achievement and attendance in future years of schooling"
– Hancock et al., 2013; Zubrick, 2014

Declines in achievement are evident with any level of absence. However, greater numbers of absences are typically associated with larger declines in student achievement (Gottfried, 2014; Hancock et al., 2013). Studies of chronic absenteeism (missing more than 10% of school days) show that regardless of the type, absence, has a compounding negative impact on academic performance (Gershenson et al., 2017; Gottfried, 2009; Zubrick, 2014).

As absences accrue over several years, the effect on a student's academic achievement is cumulative. Hancock et al. (2013) found that Year 3 students with an accumulated unauthorised absence rate of 10% in each of their first three years of schooling achieved approximately 36 points lower in Year 3 on the NAPLAN numeracy domain than students with no unauthorised absences during the same period. As students generally gain 100 points from Year 3 to Year 5 (Hancock et al. 2013), a 36 point difference is almost two thirds of a year's growth in achievement that students with high rates of unauthorised absences fail to reach. This impact continues to be evident in further years as well.

Learning for Life

The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* scholarship program supports children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The program incorporates a number of initiatives, including funding for cost of educational resources, a program coordinator assigned to work with families to create positive home-school learning environments, and access to short term programs/mentor activities to supplement the child's education. All students are assigned a Unique Student Identifier allowing their progress, including their attendance and achievement, to be tracked throughout their time in the program to allow at risk children to be identified and supported early. The program focuses on partnerships between families, schools, communities and sponsors and promotes a 'beyond school' approach to boosting vulnerable students' attendance and achievement. *Learning for Life* supports over 38,000 vulnerable children each year. As of 2017, 79% of former scholarship holders were either fully or partially engaged in work and/or study. The *Learning for Life* program demonstrates that a holistic approach to student attendance and achievement can improve educational outcomes for Australia's vulnerable children.

"Regular monitoring of the achievement and attendance of all students as they move through school is critical so that timely and targeted support is provided to students who need it. This includes those students who experience challenges over multiple years, as well as students whose achievement and attendance decline as they move through high school." (The Smith Family, 2018)

At a glance

The effects of non-attendance on achievement are greater for disadvantaged students.

Absenteeism can be compounded by socio-economic disadvantage

"Declines in achievement due to absence are steeper, and arguably more consequential, for disadvantaged students"

– Zubrick, 2014

Achievement gaps between students in more disadvantaged schools compared with students in more advantaged schools are well documented. Students in more advantaged schools typically have higher levels of attendance and achievement (Hancock et al., 2013). Disparities in achievement on NAPLAN, between more and less advantaged students, are usually in place by Year 3 and are generally consistent over time. In the numeracy domain, the average achievement gap between students in the most and least advantaged schools was approximately two thirds of a year's growth: 34 points in Year 3 and 42 points in Year 7 (Hancock et al., 2013; Zubrick, 2014).

This achievement gap is likely exacerbated by non-attendance. Starting from a lower NAPLAN achievement base, students experiencing disadvantage may be more likely to slip below the national minimum standard if they miss learning opportunities due to non-attendance. Hancock et al. (2013) found that students experiencing disadvantage were more likely to fall below the national minimum standard across NAPLAN domains with a smaller number of absences compared to students experiencing less disadvantage. For all Indigenous students, only those with regular attendance records (>90% attendance) scored above the national minimum standard on the numeracy domain. In comparison, non-Indigenous students with 60-70% attendance were likely to achieve above the national minimum standard on the numeracy domain.

At a glance

There are many complex causes of student absenteeism including individual, familial, school-related, economic and socio-cultural factors.

Factors influencing attendance

A variety of complex, interrelated factors influence student absenteeism (Demir & Karabeyoglu, 2016). These factors may be related to the individual student, their parents/family or their school, their socio-economic situation or their socio-cultural context. Understanding the complex interactions between these factors is crucial to addressing problematic attendance and optimising outcomes for all Australian students.

Individual factors

Individual factors that influence student absenteeism relate to student's attitudes and motivations. The individual factors that are most likely to predict a student's non-attendance include:[1]

- Academic self-concept and self-esteem – negative beliefs about academic abilities and feeling academically inadequate

- Not feeling safe at school – being the victim of bullying

- Depression and anxiety

- Lack of connectedness to school and peers – lack of 'belonging'

- Negative attitudes towards teachers

- Lack of motivation or goals

- Disliking school, boredom, pursuit of other activities outside school.

[1] (Balkıs, Arslan, & Duru, 2016; Dreise, Milgate, Perrett, & Meston, 2016; Feldman et al., 2014; Kearney, 2008; London et al., 2016; Prout Quicke & Biddle, 2017; Thornton, Darmody, & McCoy, 2013).

At a glance

Research suggests that various socio-cultural factors such as connectedness to the school environment, perceived relevance of the curriculum to the student's own circumstances and cultural differences have a critical effect on attendance.

A sense of belonging to the school

As part of the OECD's global education survey, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a sample of Australian 15 year old students were asked to rate their level of agreement against several items measuring students' sense of 'belonging' at their school. Overall, "*Australian students reported having a significantly poorer sense of belonging at school compared to students across the OECD*" (De Bortoli, 2018).

Family factors

"The level of respect the family has for education is seen as a role model for students"
– Demir & Karabeyoglu, 2016

Parental attitudes can shape a child's attitudes to attendance (Demir & Karabeyoglu, 2016; Thornton et al., 2013). Family involvement, in the form of support with homework and academic progress, active monitoring of attendance and participation in the school community, can increase a student's engagement and achievement at school. Correspondingly, a lack of such parental involvement can have negative effects on student attendance (Thornton et al., 2013). Instability and conflict in the home also predict students' non-attendance (Demir & Karabeyoglu, 2016; London et al., 2016; Thornton et al., 2013).

If parents do not value education and are not involved in their child's schooling, children may adopt similar attitudes, which might inform their decisions about whether to attend. This is particularly important to consider in the early childhood context because at this stage of schooling, *"student attendance patterns are more of a reflection of parental attitudes and behaviours and of family stability than of the student's own choices"* (Connolly & Olson, 2012).

In addition to parental attitudes, the day-to-day realities of the family context can have a strong impact on a child's education. For example, the links between absenteeism and disadvantage are well documented, both within Australia and around the world (Dreise et al., 2016; Ehrlich et al., 2014; Hancock et al., 2013; Zubrick, 2014). Poverty, geographical isolation, difficulty accessing affordable transport and limited schooling options contribute to absenteeism, particularly in isolated communities (Dreise et al., 2016; Queensland Audit Office, 2012).

School-related factors

The school environment can influence students' decisions about attendance (Demir & Karabeyoglu, 2016; Prout Quicke & Biddle, 2017). For example, if students perceive a 'climate of tolerance' for bullying or racism, they may not feel safe to attend (Demir & Karabeyoglu, 2016; London et al., 2016; Thornton et al., 2013). A sense of belonging to the school community is also an important factor related to absenteeism. A lack of belonging or connectedness to the school may be characterised by poor relationships with teachers and conflict with peers or ostracism from peer groups (Demir & Karabeyoglu, 2016; London et al., 2016).

At a glance

- Early learning experiences are critical to later attendance.

- Understanding the complex factors that influence student absenteeism are critical to addressing persistent attendance and achievement gaps.

The importance of early learning experiences

"Research findings from the past decade unequivocally agree that the first years of life are a critical period of intense learning for children; these years provide the foundation for later academic and social success"
– AIHW, 2015

Findings from both US and Australian studies highlight the importance of setting positive attendance habits early in a child's schooling. This includes attending early childhood education programs and early schooling. In an Australian study, researchers demonstrated that children who had attended a pre-school program at ages 4 or 5 achieved up to 20 points higher across NAPLAN domains in Year 3, compared with students who did not attend pre-school. This equates to approximately 20 weeks of schooling by the Year 3 level, that students who did not attend pre-school missed out on (Warren & Haisken-DeNew, 2013). The link between attendance at pre-school, and Year 3 literacy and numeracy achievement is strong, even after controlling for various socio-demographic variables, indicating pre-school attendance has a significant impact on achievement outcomes in later years of compulsory schooling (Warren & Haisken-DeNew, 2013).

International research demonstrates that chronic absenteeism in pre-school and Year 1 predicts patterns of non-attendance in later years (Attridge, 2016; Connolly & Olson, 2012; Dubay & Holla, 2016). This is compounded by socioeconomic circumstances. Students experiencing disadvantage were more likely to be chronically absent in the early years of compulsory schooling compared to less disadvantaged students (Ehrlich et al., 2014). Furthermore, research conducted in the US showed a strong relationship between chronic absences in pre-school, particularly absences exceeding 18 days, and declines in achievement later on at the Year 1 level across reading and mathematics (Gottfried, 2014).

- Set positive attendance habits in early years of schooling.

- Create a welcoming school environment for students by involving families and communities in purposeful, authentic and ethical ways.

- Include detailed collection of information about individual absences to enable schools to identify 'at-risk' students and intervene early.

Addressing non-attendance

"The major opportunity for preventing poor attendance is at the point of entry to preschool, pre-primary and Year 1…setting the expectation and pattern about attendance early may offer the best long-term sustainable approach to addressing poor attendance…Beyond this, individual treatment and targeting will need to be tailored to circumstances"
– Zubrick, 2014

Set positive attendance habits early

Given the importance of early learning experiences on academic and social achievement, it is clear that school attendance should be prioritised in the formative years. During the development of a student's foundational experiences of school expectations, a commitment to adherence to the school's policy should be encouraged. Some schools accomplish this by praising student attendance, rewarding student punctuality, and insisting on parental explanation of absences which may also set up precedent to reduce the number of unauthorised absences in later years.

For schools and teachers, attendance policies and procedures require the necessary breadth and nuance to adapt to the needs of individual students, while also encouraging the early adoption of positive attendance habits. For families and students, the benefits of expecting positive attendance habits early are two-fold; it assists students to understand the importance and value of schooling from the outset, and ensures families appreciate the importance of children going to school.

Create a welcoming school environment for students

Policies and responses at the school level will be most effective if they simultaneously target factors at the community and family level, that is, factors *''inside' and 'outside' the school gates'* (Dreise et al., 2016). It is important to ensure schools foster a culture of safety and inclusiveness to promote student belonging to their school communities and encourage all students to participate in their schooling. This includes measures aimed at reducing instances of bullying and promoting positive peer to peer and student-teacher relationships as well as a climate of meaningful and authentic parental and community involvement. The importance of creating inclusive classrooms is encapsulated in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Teacher Standards). Initiatives like the Australian Government's Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) adopt a community-focused approach to school attendance, employing local people to work with schools, families, parents, and community organisations to address attendance issues (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, n.d.).

Identify 'at risk' students and intervene early

Strategies aimed at the individual level are also critical. A recent study conducted by the Smith Family highlighted the importance of tracking individual students over time to monitor their academic progress and attendance, to identify 'at-risk' students and intervene early. This study also illustrated the importance of targeted, individualised support to assist at-risk students to improve their attendance, and demonstrated the success of such an approach (The Smith Family, 2018).

Similarly, the Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) focuses on monitoring individual student attendance to allow for the provision of individualised support as required (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018). In order for schools to locate and act early to address each student's attendance, it is vital they track individual students over time to monitor their attendance and to collect information on the reasons absences are occurring (Hancock et al., 2018; The Smith Family, 2018). *The National standards for student attendance data reporting* (ACARA, 2015b) clearly outlines the various absence types applicable to Australian schools. Implementing data collection standards such as these would assist schools to collect information about whether a student's absence was authorised or unauthorised and track individual attendance records over time, allowing interventions to be individually tailored.

Conclusion

"Students start school with very significant variations in their knowledge, skills and capabilities…it is crucial to maximise each student's learning growth each year, rather than simply supporting each student to attain the minimum proficiency for the year level"
– Gonski et al., 2018

There are a variety of interrelated, complex factors affecting students' decisions to attend school. Irrespective of the reasons, the evidence is clear – non-attendance affects student outcomes in profound and significant ways. The effects of non-attendance are cumulative and if they begin in the early years of schooling, they persist into future years. As a result, early attendance patterns, particularly in pre-school and Year 1 of compulsory schooling, are vital. In particular, unauthorised absences are strongly associated with compounding declines in achievement and engagement.

This link between attendance and achievement is potentially more consequential for students experiencing relative disadvantage including Indigenous students. The complex interplay of factors affecting students' attendance habits, including the school environment, parental involvement in their child's schooling, and socio-cultural reasons for absences such as a lack of connectedness to the school community, can create a cycle of absenteeism and disengagement.

Addressing attendance requires a holistic approach to engagement that targets individual circumstances both within and outside the classroom. Such an approach is reflected in the recommendations outlined in the recent *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian School*s (Gonski et al., 2018), which suggested the Australian education system needs to pivot away from the industrial model to a more individualised approach to maximise the learning and development of each and every child. This is particularly important for specific groups. For example, closing the attendance gap for Indigenous students is a challenge that will require more than mere acknowledgement of attendance and achievement disparities and an authentic approach to addressing engagement of these students.

It is vital that students attend and engage with the learning opportunities offered in classrooms. By setting attendance standards early, ensuring students feel a sense of belonging to their school, taking a 'whole-of-community' approach, collecting detailed attendance information and planning individualised and culturally authentic approaches to addressing attendance, teachers, school leaders and school communities will be better equipped to support students to engage with their education.

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