**What does school attendance tell us about how students feel about school - and what can we do about it?**

**[Student Wellbeing Hub](https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/) webinar presented by Dr Lyn O’Grady**

**Held on June 21, 2022**

The recording of the webinar will be published on this page in coming weeks: <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/webinars/>

The team will follow up on suggestions for upcoming webinars. Subscribe to the Newsletter for more details: <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/>

**Strategies suggested by participants in the webinar**

Participants contributed strategies aimed at addressing and decreasing absenteeism in their schools. Please note that some contributors made the point that learning can take place in other places instead of or as well as the school environment.

**Rewards/special events/engagement**

* Our school from a low socioeconomic area offers meat trays sponsored by a local butcher to a lucky draw for students attending the whole week.
* Hold a weekly lunchtime craft group to boost wellbeing and engagement. To assist building friendships and support students who do not have many friends or their best friend is away due to COVID.
* Health and wellbeing group and/or a ‘Get active’ program group for students who may have reduced attendance. Providing a fun 'hook' for at least one day to attend school.
* My year 12 students and I are going to run a respect campaign with a focus on attendance and reaching a particular percentage of attendance. As a wellbeing coordinator I am ringing home to have regular check-ins to see what I can support.
* We have regular positive rewards for students who attend regularly, such as a Principal's Tea Party, awards, etc.
* Tracking class attendance across the school and recognising the highest class at the school level and to the community. A student is "drawn out of a hat" to win a prize. This is done each week.
* We are attempting to engage the extreme school avoiders by completing house visits, engaging families, promoting engagement in the school environment in different areas - such as getting them to help/volunteer in the canteen or completing roles that they feel more valued in around school. We are also getting them settled and completing work in the wellbeing area (quieter space), and then getting them settled back into the classroom.
* At our school we look to try and get the students engaged in the school 'life' or activities to give them an extra incentive to come to school. Our year 6 students participate as 'Bridge Builders' who wander around at lunch breaks assisting with any issues in the playground. This helps them develop great self-worth within the school and can help younger grades have a better experience at school.
* We introduced a 'birthday cape' for students who attend school on their birthday as we found a lot of students were staying home on their birthday.
* Reward morning tea for students with great attendance.

**Processes**

* We reward good attendance and respond immediately to non-attendance via text message. We are also using weekly SMS messaging through the ‘Pioneering Attendance’ program to engage parents with weekly class activities.
* Class teachers are responsible to monitor and follow up on student attendance. Students of concern are discussed with the leadership team. The leadership team raises concerns about individual students to Learning Support Team. Then the LST and Assistant Principal make contact with parents/carers to discuss and support. Attendance is then monitored over time to ensure that no further issues arise. If attendance becomes habitual, DET support is accessed and formalised through HSLO.
* A strategy used in our school is to send an immediate text message to parents to say students are away.

**Modified program**

* Partial day return plans building to full day attendance.

**External forms of support**

* We partner with amazing agencies such as Uniting, Smith Family and Ardoch at our school. It it helps remove 'barriers' to attending
* The Smith Family offer PAR (Participation, Attendance, Retention) program.

**Masks**

* I have had young people comment about preferring to attend school wearing masks - especially the anxious ones.
* My school is an SSP so staff are mandated to still wear masks around students indoors.