



Develop a positive school culture

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Students are more likely to attend and achieve at school if they feel accepted, valued, respected and included. Research suggests that staff morale also has a significant impact on student attendance.

Schools should promote positive relationships between and amongst students, staff, and parents. Anti-bullying strategies and programs that develop social and emotional skills can help nurture a safe, caring and connected school environment.

Positive relationships with parents can also assist in supporting their children's attendance at school.

Attendance reward schemes are amongst a mix of strategies implemented by many schools that have achieved significant improvements in attendance. These programs can help in building a sense of community and creating a positive school environment that students want to be a part of.

Ideas¹

- Ensure the school has established appropriate policies that support a safe and caring environment e.g. learning and wellbeing strategies, anti-bullying policies, behaviour programs
- Encourage positive, respectful relationships between staff and students. Talk with students. Ensure students know that staff at the school care about them.
- Implement strategies to address issues such as learning difficulties
- Encourage students to look after each other. Establish peer tutoring or mentoring programs.
- Make a fuss of students. Let them know that you want them to come to school. Greet students by name as they arrive at school.
- Plan activities that children look forward to participating in
- Structure opportunities for all students to be successful and celebrated at something
- Schedule surprise special events on days with high absences (usually Fridays and the last day of term)

¹ These ideas have been collected from Queensland schools, nationally, and internationally. Schools will need to consider local circumstances, priorities, age of students etc in determining which (if any) of these ideas might be useful in the local context.



Ideas (continued)²

- Establish relationships with feeder schools so that students and parents feel part of the school community before enrolling. Encourage parents to bring younger siblings along to school events.
- Set and communicate high expectations of all students
- Provide a wide range of learning experiences and variety in the curriculum, for example, access to vocational education and training options, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, work experience, guest speakers, excursions
- Establish partnerships with universities to help students develop long term aspirational career goals
- Allow students to influence what is taught or how it is taught. Consider the learning styles and needs of all students when planning lessons.
- Offer extra-curricular activities that give students additional motivation to attend
- Encourage parents to be involved in the school through the P&C, as tuckshop volunteers, mentoring children with homework, assisting in the classroom
- Involve parents in school decision-making
- Hold events such as 'meet the parents' evenings, parent orientation, coffee mornings, open afternoons, new family inductions, new family BBQs, P&C picnics, grandparents day, parent and teacher interviews, or parent and community forums
- Encourage parents to be positive about attending school and to establish routines that help students get to school on time
- Recognise the diversity of cultures represented at the school through special events such as Harmony Day, NAIDOC, welcoming ceremonies, greetings in various languages at the school entry and on parade
- Send congratulatory letters or postcards to students with improved attendance and/or their parents
- Present certificates, ribbons or trophies for individuals or the class with the highest attendance or most improved attendance
- Organise events or fun activities at the end of each term for all students who have had 100% attendance during the term
- Organise a special occasion once a year for the top 20% of attendees (such as an excursion or meeting with a local celebrity)
- Hold a free dress day for the class with the best attendance in a term, semester or year.

Useful links

- [Learning and Wellbeing framework](#)
- [Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying](#)

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Useful links (continued)

- [Parent Information Sheet Number 5: Get set for Prep – How to get involved](#) (includes ideas for other year levels)
- [Smart Choices Fact Sheet No. 7: Ideas for non-food rewards for students](#)

Relevant case studies

- [Brisbane State High School's commitment to learning and wellbeing](#)
- [Northern Beaches State High School – Wellbeing for learning and life](#)
- [Cunnamulla State School – Support for Indigenous students](#)