



**EVIDENCE  
FOR LEARNING**

# Insights Paper

Identifying and taking action for students at risk of disengagement from school during the phases of the COVID-19 response

October 2020

Evidence for Learning has produced this Insights Paper with the involvement of five Victorian public schools. We thank them for sharing their deep expertise and experience, and appreciate their commitment to knowledge sharing during an incredibly busy time for schools.

This Insights Paper draws heavily from, and builds upon the 2018-2019 *Insights for Early Action Research Project* (the Early Action Project) commissioned by the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership (part of the Victorian Department of Education and Training). This project, conducted by Evidence for Learning in partnership with the Monash University Faculty of Education, sought to understand and improve how Victorian schools identify students who are at risk of disengagement, and the processes and enablers for taking early action to keep students engaged with their education.

The Early Action Project systematically reviewed national and international research studies that investigated effective early identification and intervention strategies for students at risk of disengagement. It supplemented this literature review with qualitative case studies about the current processes and actions taken for early identification and intervention in 10 Victorian public schools. The systematic global literature review and case study summaries are available on Bastow's website.




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# Guide to this Insights Paper

**This paper is intended to assist school leaders identify and take action for students at risk of disengagement from their education during the phases of the COVID-19 response – meaning both the periods of learning from home and in the transition and adaption back in school sites. It covers indicators, processes and enabling conditions to support school decision making that are relevant to both these phases of the response.**

This paper is based on selected academic literature and insights from five Victorian public schools' activities during the COVID-19 phases. It draws heavily from the findings of a systematic global literature review and a case study investigation conducted with ten Victorian public schools in 2018 as part of the Early Action Project.

The paper has three sections:

## 1. Introduction

Background to the paper and the challenges faced by students and schools during the COVID-19 phases.

## 2. Identifying students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases

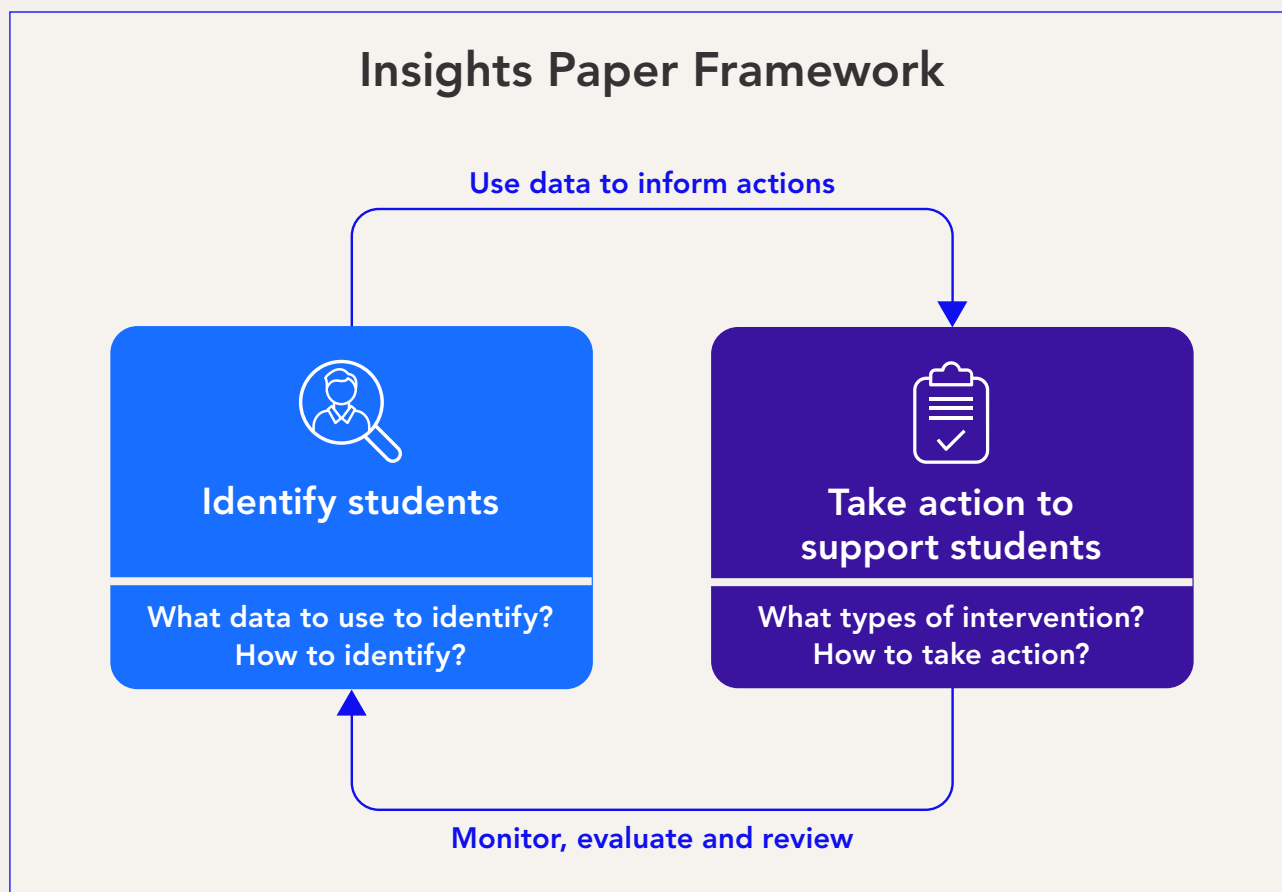
**What** – general indicators of disengagement and those most relevant during the COVID-19 phases.

**How** – processes and enabling conditions that schools can use to identify students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases.

## 3. Taking action to support students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases

**What** – the types of support schools can consider during the COVID-19 phases.

**How** – the processes and enabling conditions can support students during the COVID-19 phases.



## Methodology

The paper used a three-stage process that prioritised practical insights for schools and leaders as follows:

1. Analysis of research literature to distil findings related to identifying and supporting students at risk of disengagement that are relevant to the education situations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis drew heavily from the findings of the [global literature review](#) and [case study investigation](#) conducted with ten Victorian public schools in 2018 as part of the Early Action Project.<sup>1</sup>
2. Capture of schools' experience through semi-structured interviews with seven leaders from five Victorian public schools. Out of the five schools, three were secondary (Year 7-12), one was senior secondary (Year 10-12) and one was a P-12 college encompassing primary and secondary. Three of the schools were case studies in the Early Action Project in 2018. Interviews explored questions about identifying and supporting students at risk of disengagement during learning from home as well as plans for identifying and supporting these students during the transition and adaption back in school sites.
3. Synthesis of the relevant literature combined with the input from education personnel to create a relevant resource for school leaders.

The paper does not:

- collect a representative picture of the activities across all schools regarding students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases
- conduct a rigorous review of the evidence for engaging students during pandemics and other large-scale interruptions to normal school operations
- undertake a review of the efficacy of identification and intervention processes, strategies and technology used by the five participating schools to address disengagement during the COVID-19 phases

More detail is provided in [Appendix A: Methodology](#).

## Using this paper

School leaders are encouraged to adopt and adapt the insights in this paper to the needs of their school and their students. Leaders should use their **professional discretion** to select the indicators and processes applicable to their context and to consult with relevant family members, child support agencies and wellbeing professionals to design and implement suitable support strategies.



For school leaders who are using a tiered response to intervention, the insights shared in this paper align with the following tiers:

Tier	Insights shared in this paper
<p><b>Tier 1 – All students:</b> schools are encouraged to be aware of potential heightened anxiety and other impacts on wellbeing, and to use data and tools to proactively support students and their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop early warning systems that monitor all students (see <a href="#">Section 2</a> for indicators of disengagement to adapt to your context)</li> <li>• Take action using school-wide initiatives that support all students and staff (see <a href="#">Section 3</a> for examples of school-wide initiatives)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tier 2 – Students at elevated risk of disengaging:</b> schools are supported to access and use data to identify cohorts that may have an increased risk of disengaging e.g. out-of-home care, disability, English as an Additional Language, history of poor attendance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify students at risk of disengagement using strong predictors of disengagement (see <a href="#">Section 2</a> for indicators of disengagement to adapt to your context)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tier 3 – Students who are a known risk of disengaging:</b> schools are encouraged to ensure students who have already been identified as at risk of disengaging are continually monitored</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take action using student-specific initiatives that support those students who have been identified as at risk of disengagement (see <a href="#">Section 3</a> for examples of student-specific initiatives)</li> </ul>

Unless otherwise noted, quotations from school leaders throughout the paper highlight current school practices as stated by interviewees from the five participating schools.

Accompanying resources to this paper – a one-page summary and a resource sheet containing key graphics from the paper – are available on the [Evidence for Learning website](#).



## Assessing the most relevant information for your school

### Is your school already implementing processes to identify at risk students?

- Review the insights on ‘what’ predictors of disengagement to use during the COVID-19 phases ([Section 2](#) – What) to check whether there are any additional predictors that you might want to adopt and adapt to your school context
- Review the insights on ‘what’ supports schools could provide to students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases? ([Section 3](#) – What) to check whether there are any additional supports that you might want to adopt and adapt to your school context

### Is your school yet to implement processes to identify at risk students?

- In addition to the suggestions to identify ‘what’ predictors and supports that are best suited to your context, review the insights on ‘how’ schools implement a process and the enabling conditions required to identify students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases ([Section 2](#) – How) to inform how you might implement an identification process to suit your context
- Review the insights on ‘how’ schools implement a process and the enabling conditions required to take action to support students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases ([Section 3](#) – How) to inform how you might implement a ‘taking action’ process to suit your context

# 1

## Introduction





## Rationale

Students who disengage with their education are significantly disadvantaged with respect to their employment, health, wealth, and socio-cultural relationships.<sup>2</sup>

In 2018, approximately 17% of Australian students were not retained from Year 10 to Year 12 and 21% of the estimated potential year 12 population did not meet the requirements of a year 12 certificate or equivalent.<sup>3</sup>

UNESCO suggests that the education disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic carry a high social and economic cost, particularly for students and families in the most vulnerable circumstances. UNESCO highlights a potential rise in disengagement rates:

***"It is a challenge to ensure children and youth return and stay in school when schools reopen after closures. This is especially true of protracted closures and when economic shocks place pressure on children to work and generate income for financially distressed families" – UNESCO<sup>4</sup>***

The learning from home phase of the pandemic is only one part of the COVID-19 period overall, and students may disengage at any phase of the COVID-19 response, including during the transition back to school sites where learning loss and risks of disengagement due to financial or mental stress may be exacerbated.

The Early Action Project highlighted that school staff can purposefully develop early-warning processes that monitor all students in order to proactively intervene when students show signs of disengagement.<sup>1</sup> As a result of disruptions to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now more important than ever for schools to use research-informed insights to identify and take action to help students positively engage in their schooling.

## Defining disengagement

Student disengagement from school is a continuum of experience that involves a set of interrelated factors, rather than a set state of being.

The Victorian Department of Education and Training considers a student to be disengaged from education when they:

- do not participate in all areas of the school including academic, social and extracurricular activities
- do not feel included in, or have a sense of belonging to, the school, and
- are not personally invested in and taking ownership of their learning.<sup>5</sup>

Hancock and Zubrick suggest that disengagement can occur at different levels within education (content, classroom, school, education in general), involve different dimensions (emotional, behavioural or cognitive disengagement) and is shaped by wider influences (context beyond the school such as family factors).<sup>6</sup>

For educators, the definition of 'at risk of disengagement' can blend into 'disengaged', but usually students 'at risk of disengagement' are still attending school in some form.<sup>7</sup>

## Context during the COVID-19 phases

The COVID-19 pandemic increases the risk of disengagement from school for some students due to challenges in learning from home, health and wellbeing factors, and potential learning losses and risks associated with the transition back to school.

A child's experience during the COVID-19 phases is made up of a combination of factors that contributes to their level of risk of disengagement from school. Children may face multiple risk factors (circumstances or events that increase the likelihood of poor outcomes including disengagement from school), a number of protective factors (attributes or conditions that mitigate risk and promote healthy development and wellbeing including engagement in school) or the absence of protective factors to mitigate these risks.<sup>8</sup>

### Challenges in learning from home

Some students are affected by the presence of risk factors, and the absence of protective factors, that negatively impact on their successful engagement with school. Learning from home during the COVID-19 pandemic amplifies factors in students' lives that may put them at increased risk of disengagement in school as some students:<sup>9</sup>

- Lack basic materials and resources to support home learning;
- Do not have access to digital resources and capabilities;
- Are not personally equipped for learning from home;
- Do not have parents or carers<sup>10</sup> that can support them with home learning; and
- Are not provided with learning adjustments that are suited to home learning arrangements.

Figure 1 highlights that a substantial number of Australian students might be impacted by one or more of these risk factors.

## Health and wellbeing factors

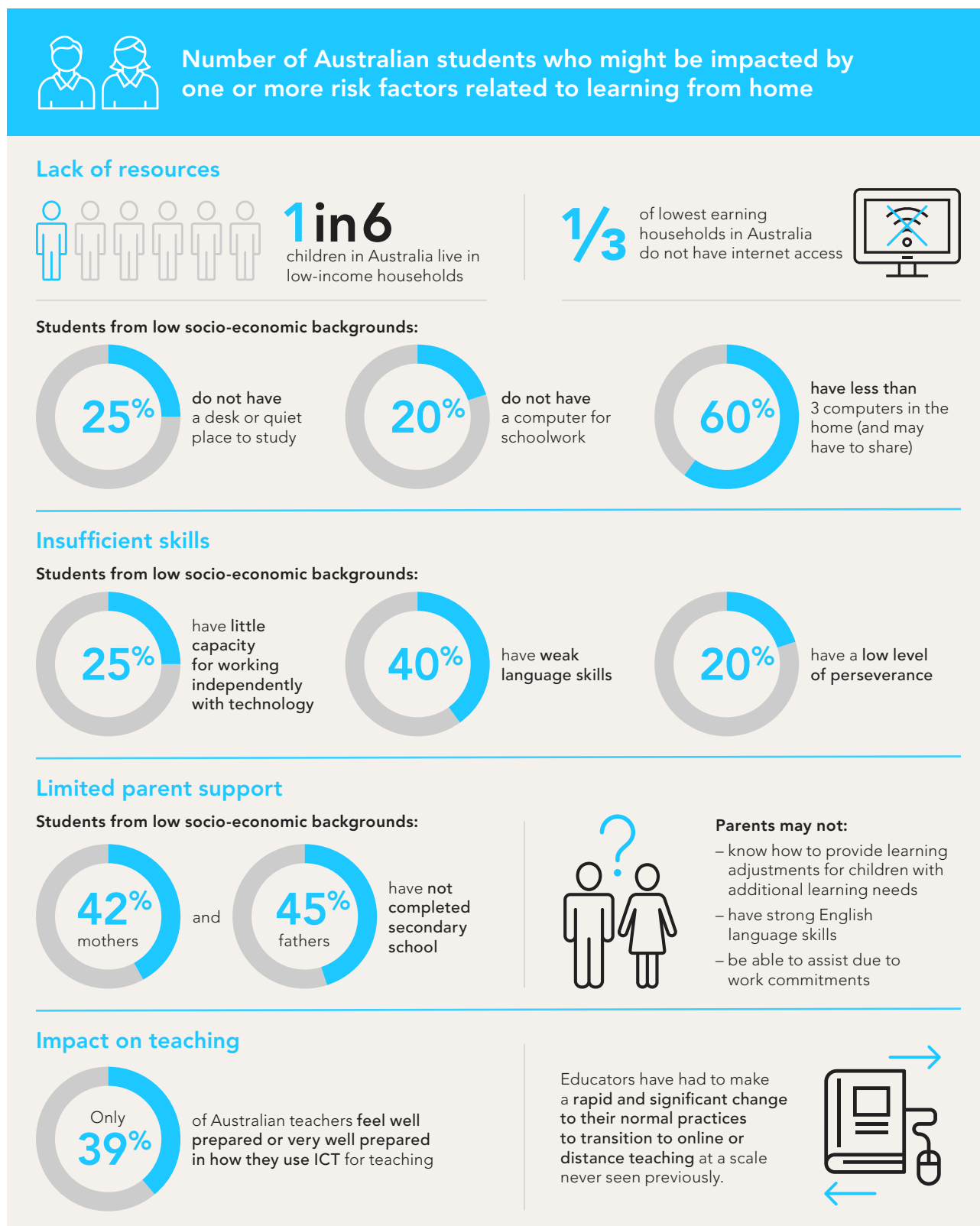
There is recent evidence that violence and vulnerability increase for children during periods of school closures associated with health emergencies.<sup>11</sup> One group of Australian academics estimates that nearly half (46%) of Australian children and young people are at risk of adverse effects on their educational, health and wellbeing outcomes by being physically disconnected from school.<sup>12</sup>

Risks to health and wellbeing may increase during the COVID-19 phases for students in vulnerable circumstances who often rely on their school to provide support services. The potential health and wellbeing-related impacts on children of physical school closures during COVID-19 include:<sup>13</sup>

- Mental health concerns including increased anxiety;
- Physical health concerns resulting from changes in physical activity levels;
- Food insecurity if meals cannot be accessed through the school or other means;
- Delays and difficulty accessing health, wellbeing and family support services;
- Increased risk of abuse, violence or inadequate care; and
- Absence of the routine and consistency that school provides, or changes to home living arrangements and visitation with parents, especially for those children who are in out of home care.

Figure 2 highlights that a substantial number of Australian students might be impacted by one or more of these risk factors.

**Figure 1: Number of Australian students who might be impacted by one or more risk factors related to learning from home<sup>14</sup>**



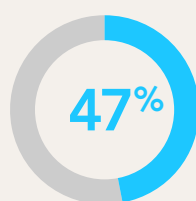
**Figure 2: Estimates of Australian students that might be impacted by one or more risk factors related to health and wellbeing<sup>15</sup>**



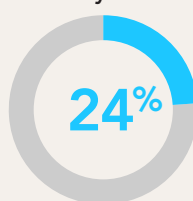
## Estimates of Australian students that might be impacted by health and wellbeing related risks

### Stress and anxiety

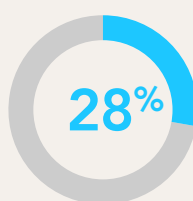
In a recent UNESCO survey of 1007 Australian 13-17 years old olds:



reported that COVID-19 has negatively impacted their levels of stress and anxiety and 14% say they have been very negatively impacted



said that they feel isolated and unsure about the support options available to them outside their family



reported that their parent/s or carer had lost all or part of their income

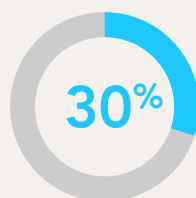


**175 000**

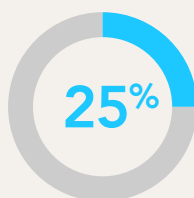
Australian students might be newly affected by household unemployment and resulting financial distress.

### Isolation and quarantine impacts

A 2013 study on health-related disasters found that:



of isolated or quarantined children and



of quarantined or isolated parents

meet the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder.

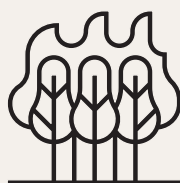


Emerging studies from China show **elevated depression and anxiety** among children under lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic

### Other trauma



NSW family violence cases have increased since the COVID-19 outbreak, including a sharp rise in violence being reported for the first time.



Trauma and economic losses from other recent events such as the 2019-2020 bushfires, may add to any mental health impacts experienced by students and families.

### Impact on teaching



School staff may experience their own **increased levels of mental health concerns** associated with stress and workloads, and schools may find it more difficult to communicate with parents and other organisations.

Other recent research considers that there may be improved mental health, parent-child relationships and engagement in learning as a result of physical school closures during COVID-19, particularly for introverted or anxious children. Factors such as the severity of the pandemic in the location, type of distance learning offered, child-related factors such as age and family-related factors such as level of parental support can mediate the impact of the COVID-19 school closures and disruptions on a child's learning, health and wellbeing.<sup>16</sup>

### Potential learning loss and risks of disengagement on the transition and adaption back in school sites

The transition and adaption back in school sites present opportunities and challenges for schools. The transition back is not necessarily a return to 'normal', given the continuing nature of the pandemic and associated health and hygiene requirements.

Returning to face-to-face learning might be difficult for some students and there is a risk that some may not return to classrooms at all.<sup>17</sup>

A small number of students may have thrived during the learning from home phase, finding it more conducive to their needs, and might be anxious about physically returning to school.<sup>18</sup> Reflecting on what worked for these children is an opportunity to explore new learning approaches for some children as part of the transition and adaption back in school sites.

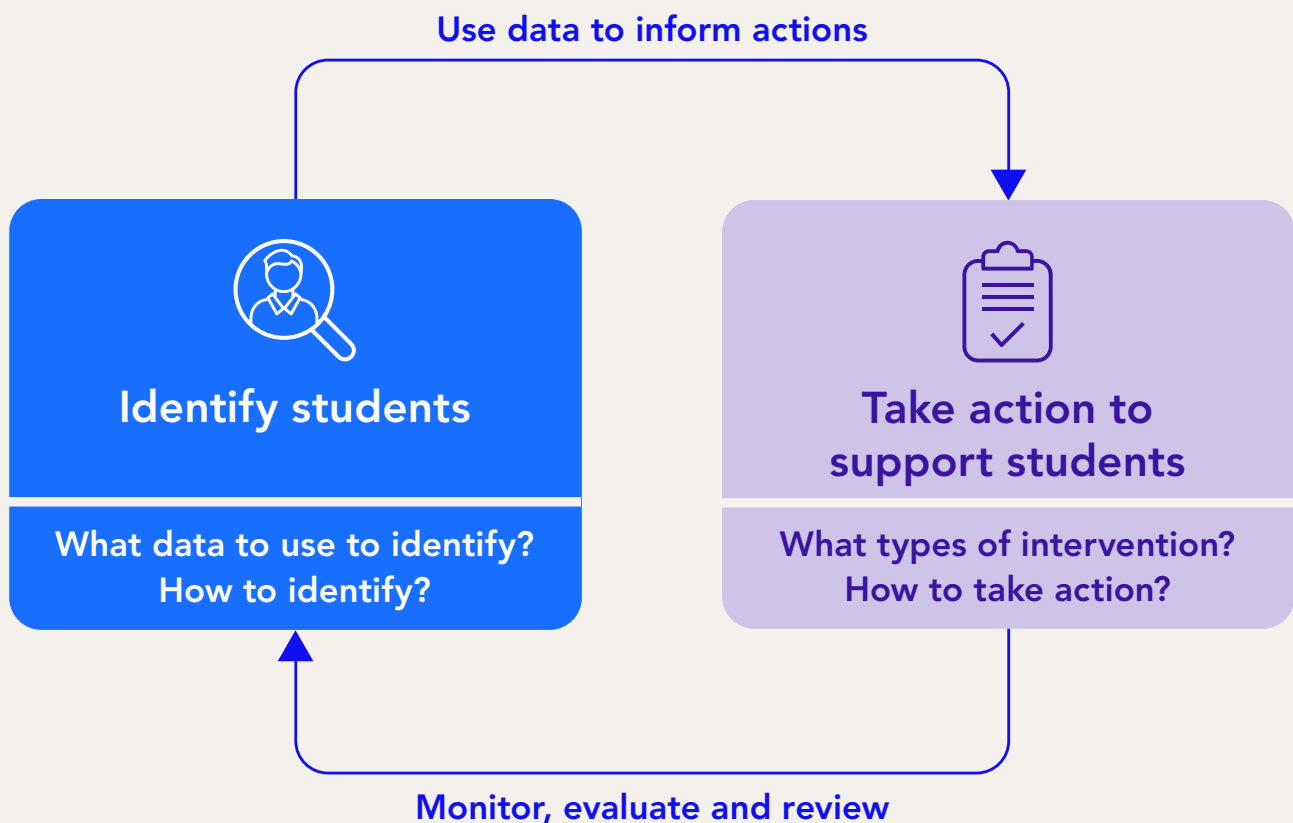
Low academic achievement and experiencing learning difficulties are some of the strongest predictors of disengagement from school.<sup>19</sup> A recent literature review found that the majority of Australian children should not experience a large and sustained negative impact on their learning as a result of the learning from home phase, especially given its short duration.<sup>20</sup> Other relevant research suggests that learning loss caused by extended breaks or disruptions to schooling is usually made up by most students on the return to school.<sup>21</sup>

There is, however, a risk of poorer learning outcomes for some students, including students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students with English as a second language, students with additional learning needs, and students in rural and remote areas. This cohort is more negatively impacted by online delivery than their peers.<sup>22</sup> A recent Australian paper estimates that after two terms of learning from home, a Year 9 student experiencing disadvantage may lose the equivalent of 4.6 weeks of learning in reading and 6.7 weeks of learning in numeracy.<sup>9</sup>

Literature on other large-scale events that disrupt schooling, such as natural disasters, indicates that features associated with the school itself, as well as the extent of impact of the disaster, may also influence the effect on learning outcomes. Students in schools with higher levels of impact from the 2009 Victorian bushfires made less expected gains in reading and maths than their peers in schools with low or no impact from the bushfires.<sup>23</sup> Lower functioning schools experience a larger detrimental disruption to their academic performance brought about by a natural disaster.<sup>24</sup> About 10% of schools impacted by a hurricane in Texas in 2008 did not recover their academic performance trajectory following school closures.<sup>24</sup>

# 2

## Identifying students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases



## WHAT – the general indicators of disengagement and those most relevant for the COVID-19 phases

### General predictors of disengagement

The Early Action Project found that the strongest, student-level predictors of disengagement were:<sup>1</sup>

- **educational performance** – poor academic performance (particularly in English and mathematics), a lack of progression through the grade levels (known as ‘grade retention’ particularly in primary and lower secondary school) strengthens the chance of a student not completing school
- **student behaviour (including attendance)** – overt student behaviours can lead to disengagement, including high absenteeism, misbehaviour in secondary school, secondary school suspensions, drug and alcohol use during high school, teenage parenting, and friends who engage in criminal behaviour or have disengaged from schooling. More subtle behaviours such as mental health issues (e.g. feeling depressed, lonely, sad) and withdrawal (e.g. quiet in class, exclusion from friendship groups) may also predict disengagement. Disengagement in primary and lower secondary school might start with these less severe forms of withdrawal.
- **demographic factors** – gender (male), cultural and linguistic background (students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE), students from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background) and disability are important predictors of disengagement.
- **student attitudinal factors** – student’s beliefs, values and attitudes may impact disengagement. Student’s educational aspirations (how far a student expects to go in school) has an effect on whether the student completes Year 12.

Family-related factors are also important predictors of disengagement:<sup>1</sup>

- **family socio-economic status** – socio-economic status is an important predictor of disengagement; however, not as strong as academic performance and student behaviour. Poverty, student age, gender, attendance levels and test scores in combination are significant predictors of school completion
- **family educational support** – parental support and involvement in student academic performance and parent’s educational aspirations are important predictors of school completion. Family stress, such a change in family structure or illness, increase the likelihood of disengagement from school.

School-level characteristics are generally limited predictors of disengagement when compared to other factors:<sup>1</sup>

- **school-specific** – school-related factors such as school resources, education program, governance, teacher quality and peer relationships are less important predictors of disengagement than student-related and family-related factors.
- **classroom climate** – while there is a limited relationship between school characteristics and Year 12 completion rates in general, it does not mean that all aspects of school are unimportant. Some research highlights the importance of specific aspects such as classroom and school climate, and teacher attitudes.

A 2019 meta-analysis on school dropout research confirmed that multiple child, family, school and peer related risk factors contribute to the risk of disengagement from school. The study highlighted that the most predictive risk factors are related to grade retention, learning difficulties and low levels of academic achievement. It also confirmed that young people showing excessive absenteeism are at high risk for permanent disengagement from school, and that as risk factors accumulate, students are more likely to drop out of school.<sup>19</sup>

Early academic achievement is an especially important predictor of disengagement from school. Academic performance in primary and lower secondary school can often predict whether students will drop out or graduate in high school: “whether measured by exam success, grade point average, test scores or literacy and numeracy skills level, most [researchers] have found that early academic achievement in [primary] and [lower secondary] school is predictive of early school leaving”.<sup>25</sup>



## Increasing the accuracy of predictors

Literature analysed as part of the Early Action Project shows that:<sup>1</sup>

- The most accurate dropout predictors examine trajectories of student achievement (e.g. mathematics achievement from grades 7-12) or student engagement (e.g. student engagement trajectories from grades 8-12) over long periods of time.
- The next most accurate type of dropout predictors is those based on simple cross sectional, school based data such as grades. It is more accurate to combine multiple predictors to cast the net wide (i.e. select students who have predictor x or predictor y rather than just selecting students who have predictor x and predictor y).

Most of the participating schools used existing lists of students at-risk of disengagement – based on long-standing data – as the starting point for their assessment of students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases.



## Indicators of disengagement relevant to COVID-19

There are additional factors that affect outcomes in youth exposed to disasters that can help educators identify students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases:<sup>26</sup>

- **Disaster characteristics** – the pandemic is substantially different to natural disasters like bushfires and earthquakes, but both types of events have broad impacts. Death and illness rates are relatively low in most states in Australia, however the effects of isolation and physical distancing have created disruptions in normal activities. The economic effects of loss of income or unemployment creates new strain. Students' whose families are experiencing this will be at significant risk;
- **Exposure** – the broad societal impacts and media coverage mean all students are affected to some degree. However, students whose families and friends have contracted COVID-19, and those students in Victoria who have experienced longer periods of learning from home, are likely to be affected more acutely.

As always, these additional factors are amplified where there are pre-existing risk factors identified in the general predictors (i.e. child-related factors such as socio-economic status, cultural and linguistic background and pre-existing conditions, family-related factors such as parental reactions and family interactions, and social factors such as social support).

- **New indicators** – technology used during learning from home may enable new indicators related to academic performance and student behaviour to identify students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases. Higher education literature suggests that online learning behaviours can identify students at risk of dropping out of online courses. Some schools are using additional online learning analytics gained through the learning at home phase to better identify students at risk of disengagement, as described next.<sup>27</sup> These new indicators could be used on the transition and adaption back in school sites in blended learning models.

*For the most part “the data that was being used to drive decisions before the coronavirus (e.g. attendance, classroom grades, diagnostic and formative assessments) is likely still the right information” – Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger, President and CEO of the US-based Data Quality Campaign<sup>28</sup>*

## What are schools using during COVID-19?

The participating schools used similar indicators of disengagement and associated data collection tools during the COVID-19 phases that they used prior to it.

These 'usual' predictors of disengagement, such as long-term academic achievement and attendance, proved relevant and accurate according to the participating schools. The participating school leaders highlighted that – with a few notable exceptions – the majority of the students who were identified as struggling to engage in face-to-face learning prior to the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have difficulties engaging in education during remote learning and they expect these difficulties to continue during the transition and adaption back in school sites.

Many of the participating schools used the following indicators of disengagement during the learning from home phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and plan to use them during the transition back to school sites:

- Attendance
- Personal factors including cultural background, mental health and wellbeing
- Disability
- Engagement in learning
- Family socio-economic status and issues
- Parental education support and aspirations
- Access to technology and other basic resources (during learning from home phase only)
- Student academic progress indicators, especially for Year 11 and 12 students in relation to the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) course requirements (during the transition back to school sites only)

During the **learning from home phase**, the participating schools prioritised indicators of disengagement related to access and learning engagement, including attendance, disability, engagement in learning (online learning or the collection and return of home learning packs), engagement of parents, access to devices and internet connection, and general student wellbeing information gathered by staff from one-to-one phone or online check-ins with students and or parents.

The participating schools had previously used most of these indicators, though parental engagement was of much greater importance and access to technology was a new indicator compared to those used by case study schools in the Early Action Project.

*Compared to the 2018 case study schools, participating schools were less focussed on using indicators related to academic progress, poor behaviour incidents, and educational aspirations during the learning at home phase of COVID-19, prioritising indicators related to immediate issues such as communication, access and wellbeing.*

The participating schools used various tools to collect and analyse data related to these indicators of disengagement. Most were already using student information management systems such as Compass, but as a result of remote learning are now substantially increasing their use of online and phone surveys of parents and students, online meeting technologies such as Microsoft Teams and tools such as social media (Facebook) and text messages communicate with parents.

## Snapshot from one participating school



Online learning provides schools with an opportunity to collect more detailed and nuanced learning achievement and engagement data to identify students at risk of disengagement. One participating school, with approximately 800 students, collated the following information during the learning from home period in April and May 2020:

### Remote learning statistics:

- 72,897 curriculum page views on SIMS Curriculum Learning Management System
- 924 hours spent engaging with content on SIMS
- 3,575 files submitted to Tasks in SIMS
- 2,316 synchronous video lessons using MS Teams
- 1,909 hours screen sharing time (students) via MS Teams
- 1,243 hours screen sharing time (staff) via MS Teams
- 900+ devices online per day (staff and students)

### Communication statistics:

- 3,742 per day emails between staff and students
- 3,706 form responses (feedback given – staff, students)
- 70 posts on Facebook

**In addition to increasing, by 5 times, the frequency of student engagement and wellbeing statistics collected during the period:**

- 262 positive behaviour SIMS recorded (49 for same period last year)
- 5327 student tracking notes made by staff on SIMS (953 for same period last year)

### Parental engagement:

- 52% parental engagement in remote 'Careers Conversations' held with Year 12 students (78 students in total, 41 students had parents attend) — far beyond the school's usual levels of parental engagement.

*During the transition back to school sites, the participating school leaders plan to prioritise the more traditional indicators of disengagement related to attendance, academic progress and the general health and wellbeing of students through teacher observations and face-to-face check-ins.*

Of concern to the participating school leaders during the transition and adaption back in school sites is the academic progress and stress levels of Senior Secondary Certificate of Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) students who have specific content and or practical requirements that must be met to achieve their qualification.

The school leaders interviewed indicated that on the return to school sites they plan to pay special attention to students with a disability, international students who may be struggling with language skills and access to support, and those who are impacted by financial stress or mental health issues. Some of these students, for example, may now have to work additional hours in part-time employment. Some families may be newly experiencing economic

disadvantage and not have been identified previously by the school as requiring support. The language abilities of international students may have suffered from a period of isolation from other native English speakers.








*On the return to school sites, a number of the participating schools plan to continue to use the tools that they experienced success with during the home learning phase of COVID-19, including student and parent surveys, online meeting platforms and tools such as Facebook and text messages to communicate with parents.*

A checklist and examples of the indicators and tools used by each of the participating schools can be found in [Appendix C](#).









### Summary of insights on indicators of disengagement to use during the COVID-19 phases

Figure 3 provides examples of the signs of disengagement most relevant to the COVID-19 phases.

Figure 3: Summary of insights on indicators of disengagement to use during the COVID-19 phases

Level*	Predictor type*	Prioritised by participating schools during COVID-19 phases	Overt and subtle signs of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases
 <b>Student</b>	 <b>Educational performance</b>		Strength of predictor: 
	Academic progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor results from formative assessment tasks (remote or on return to class)</li> <li>Lack of interest or confidence in learning tasks (remote or on return to class)</li> </ul>
	 <b>Behaviour</b>		Strength of predictor: 
	School attendance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor attendance; expulsion or suspension</li> <li>Late or absent from online forums, virtual check-ins or on return to class</li> </ul>
	School behaviour	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (as engagement in learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor engagement in learning tasks</li> <li>Distracted, anxious or unresponsive in online forums, virtual check-ins or on return to class</li> <li>Serious behaviour incidents on return to school sites</li> </ul>
	Social behaviour (with peers)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signs of negative and anti-social behaviour (e.g. drug/alcohol use)</li> <li>Limited online interactions with peers</li> <li>Newly enrolled students without established friends</li> <li>Social withdrawal on return to class</li> </ul>
	Relationships with adults		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No connection with any adult in the school (remote or on return to school sites)</li> <li>Avoids asking for assistance in online forums, virtual check-ins or on return to class</li> </ul>
	 <b>Demographic factors</b>		Strength of predictor: 
	Personal factors (gender, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnosed mental health issue, self-harm</li> <li>Signs of anxiety, lethargy, frustration and other indicators of poor social and emotional wellbeing</li> </ul>
	Cultural and language background	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies as a student from a language background other than English (LBOTE) including international students</li> </ul>
	Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnosed with a disability (eligible &amp; not eligible for funding)</li> <li>Has an undiagnosed disability</li> </ul>
	Teenage parenting or other caring responsibilities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has sole parenting or other caring responsibilities</li> <li>Has informal caring and other responsibilities at home especially during remote learning</li> </ul>
	 <b>Attitudinal factors</b>		Strength of predictor: 
	Educational aspirations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates that does not want complete online learning, return to school sites or continue schooling</li> <li>Attends online learning sessions, virtual check-ins or classes (on return to school sites) but does not engage in tasks or conversations</li> </ul>

## WHAT

Level*	Predictor type*	Prioritised by participating schools during COVID-19 phases	Overt and subtle signs of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases
 <b>Family</b>	 <b>Family demographics</b>		Strength of predictor: 
	Socio-economic status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unemployed parents, unstable housing situation (new or ongoing)</li> <li>Does not have learning from home equipment including devices, internet, furniture, stationery</li> <li>Working additional hours to support family, especially following the return to school sites</li> </ul>
	Family stress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent changes to family structure, sickness, additional needs or financial situation</li> <li>Poor relationship and interactions between students and parents</li> <li>Family member reactions to pandemic</li> </ul>
	 <b>Educational support</b>		Strength of predictor: 
 <b>School</b>	Parent educational support and aspirations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents unable to be contacted, unable or unwilling to support learning from home</li> <li>Parents do not join virtual activities e.g. virtual parent teacher night</li> <li>Parents encourage child to deprioritise online learning, return to school sites or future schooling</li> <li>Parents provide negative feedback (e.g. via surveys, social media)</li> <li>Newly enrolled families not known to school</li> </ul>
	 <b>School environment</b>		Strength of predictor: 
	School level factors are generally limited predictors of disengagement, however, some factors such as school climate and teacher attitudes may be important predictors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School characteristics e.g. school climate and approach to remote learning, resources available to support at-risk students (remote and on return)</li> <li>School culture and whether it prioritises ways to motivate students during remote learning and the return to school sites</li> <li>Students provide negative feedback (e.g. via surveys)</li> </ul>

\*Information in these columns is drawn from a systematic global literature review and a case study investigation conducted as part of the Early Action Project.<sup>29</sup>

Strength of predictor:  Strong |  Medium |  Low

## **HOW – processes and enabling conditions schools can use to identify students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases**

Research suggests that schools should monitor all students in order to identify and proactively intervene with those who show early signs of disengagement. How schools implement this process depends on their local context. However, there are insights from the Early Action Project and the five schools interviewed for this paper that may provide some insights and examples for school leaders, teachers and wellbeing staff about how to go about this process.

### **Collecting the data during the COVID-19 phases**












The research evidence indicates that a mix of quantitative and qualitative data is important to accurately identify students at risk of disengagement.<sup>1</sup>

During normal school times, the case study schools from the Early Action Project collected data about students at risk of disengagement using a variety of methods including student assessment tools, teacher observation, face-to-face interviews with students and or their family, student surveys, consultation with a range of school staff and professionals, referrals and school-wide positive behaviour support framework and tools.<sup>7</sup>

*During the COVID-19 phases, the participating schools used informal, formative and frequently-collected data to meet their immediate priorities for identifying students at-risk of disengagement. They were less focussed on formal, summative or historical data than they were prior to the pandemic.*

Figure 4 provides examples of the data types and assets most relevant to the COVID-19 phases.

Figure 4: Data types and assets most relevant to the COVID-19 phases

Level*	Category*	Type of data*	Data assets
 <b>Student</b>	 <b>Educational performance</b>	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current and previous student performance reports</li> <li>Formative assessment tasks (online, remote or on the return to school sites)</li> </ul>
	 <b>Behaviour</b>	Enrolment and attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance records including unexplained absences</li> </ul>
		Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>
		Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notes from virtual check-ins with students including attitudinal responses of students</li> <li>Records of engagement in online or remote learning</li> <li>Behaviour records on return to school sites</li> </ul>
	 <b>Attitudinal factors</b>	Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referral information from classroom teachers, wellbeing staff or other agencies</li> <li>Documented outcomes of a student referral meeting</li> </ul>
	 <b>Demographic factors</b>		
 <b>Family</b>	 <b>Family demographics</b>	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequent 'pulse check' online and phone surveys of students, parents and staff to check their emotional state, home learning environment and basic material needs, attitudes to online learning, preferences for communication, and emotional and other wellbeing needs</li> </ul>
	 <b>Educational support</b>		
	 <b>Attitudinal factors</b>		
 <b>School</b>	 <b>School environment</b>		

\*Information in these columns is drawn from a systematic global literature review and a case study investigation conducted as part of the Early Action Project.<sup>29</sup>

The case study schools in the Early Action Project used two main early warning tools:

- Student information management systems such as Compass to track attendance, behaviour and academic progress and 'flag' negative changes in indicators such as unexplained absences and behaviour issues
- Bespoke spreadsheets to collate and share additional data such as transition data, individual education plans, behaviour support plans, student support groups, performance assessments etc.

Both these tools were used during learning from home and planned to be used on the transition and adaption back in school sites by the five schools interviewed for this paper. Two additional tools were important during the learning from home phase:

- Online survey tools to collect rapid feedback from students, parents and staff about the educational needs of students, including emotional status and access to basic learning supplies
- Learning Management Systems to track engagement with online learning tasks.

## Processes for early identification during the COVID-19 phases

The Early Action Project suggests that schools should implement a process for early identification of students at risk of disengagement that is:<sup>1</sup>

- focused on specific key indicators but also flexible to local contexts
- based on system-level and local data but also use practitioner expertise and judgement
- timely for early prevention but also rigorous for accuracy
- targeted to those at most risk but also monitoring all students
- practical and easy to use but also building new skills and capabilities for staff to identify students at risk
- able to build upon supportive and inclusive school cultures
- focused on early identification and early intervention.

*Participating schools with comprehensive lists of students and families at-risk and a clearly defined and well understood process to identify and support them prior to the pandemic found it easy to adapt to the COVID-19 phases – meetings transitioned online but nothing else changed.*

Figure 5 contains the general insights on implementing a process for early identification of students at risk of disengagement from the Early Action Project<sup>1</sup> and specific insights from participating schools on implementing such a process during the COVID-19 phases.



**Figure 5: Insights from participating schools on early identification processes used during the COVID-19 phases**

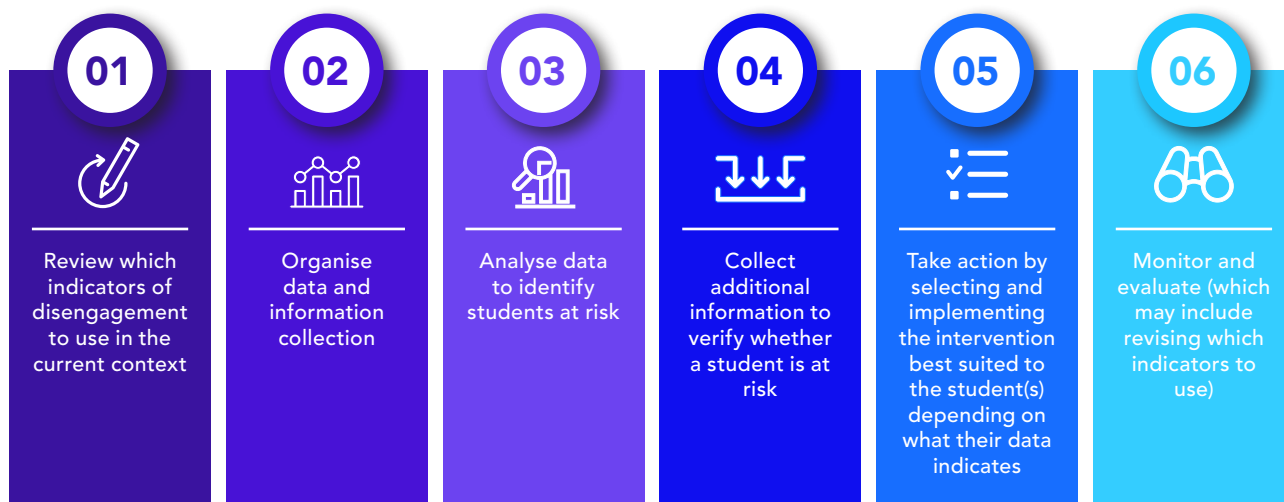
General insights on implementing a process for early identification	Insights on a process for identifying students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases
<b>Build a shared understanding of the meaning of disengagement among staff</b>	Agree shared definitions and expectations for 'attendance' and 'engagement' during learning from home and on the transition and adaption back in school sites
<b>Focus on certain key indicators</b>	Agree which indicators to prioritise during different phases of the COVID-19 response, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicators related to initial access to remote learning e.g. access to devices, disability</li> <li>• Indicators related to engagement during remote learning e.g. completed tasks</li> <li>• Indicators related to the transition and adaption back in school sites e.g. formative assessment</li> </ul>
<b>Use quantitative data in combination with teacher judgement</b>	Use teacher judgement (e.g. based on prior and current knowledge of the student and their family situation) to interpret any unusual data during these phases (e.g. changes to attendance rates) Dedicate a staff member to monitor a group of specific students over time, so that ongoing monitoring is completed by a staff member that knows those students well
<b>Build a school-wide culture that values the moral purpose and motivation for earlier identification</b>	Ensure a school-wide process to predict students at risk of disengagement is part of school priorities and is actively endorsed and supported by all levels of leadership e.g. provide support to ensure meetings about students at risk of disengagement still occur during the shifts to learning from home and transition back to school sites in online formats if required to meet any health regulations
<b>Allocate time, resources and professional development for the identification process</b>	Allocate regular and dedicated time for priority professional development and (potentially more frequent) collaboration between staff to share knowledge about students at risk of disengagement during both phases
<b>Share information between schools and with other agencies</b>	Maintain regular collaboration processes by transitioning to virtual meetings to share information with other agencies to determine whether students are being provided the supports they need through adapted services (e.g. telehealth) – this may apply during both phases to meet health regulations.
<b>Monitor all students over time</b>	Use existing datasets of students at risk of disengagement from pre-COVID-19 monitoring Monitor all students to identify those with increased risk of disengagement due to remote learning and transition back to school sites e.g. students with a disability, no device or internet connection, students who are working additional hours due to family financial stress Review trend data over time to identify any school-wide and cohort patterns in student attendance and engagement Compare datasets and staff judgements to determine accuracy and precision of key indicators for each of the COVID-19 phases

**Example process (to be adapted by schools)**

The Early Action Project suggests any process for identifying students at risk of disengagement should include the following steps:<sup>1</sup>

- organise and analyse data to identify students who miss school, have behaviour problems, or are struggling in their learning
- intervene with students who show early signs of falling 'off track'
- if data shows high rates of absenteeism, take steps to help students, parents and school staff understand the importance of attending school daily
- monitor progress and adjust interventions as needed.

The steps below elaborate this monitoring process into a general set of actions that schools can take.



As an example, at the start of the learning from home phase (or just prior to it), several participating schools used the following specific actions to identify students at risk of disengagement. These specific steps are relevant to both the learning from home and transition and adaption phases.



#### Steps 1-3: Review indicators, and organise and analyse data

- Create initial list of students at-risk of disengagement from existing long-term datasets e.g. truants
- Add students with indicators that are key to the phase, for example, the indicator of 'disability' during learning from home or the indicator of 'behavioural issues' on the return to school sites
- Triage this list to identify those who are a priority to follow-up e.g. 'red', 'amber', 'green'



#### Step 4: Collect additional information to verify whether a student is at risk

- Add teacher judgements on students who might struggle with remote learning or on the transition and adaption back in school sites
- During learning from home, add students who do not have access to devices or internet (assessed via check-in calls or surveys) and students who do not attend online learning or pick up hard copy packs, and those who staff are unable to contact directly or via their families

- During the transition and adaption back in school sites, add students who are academically behind or not coping with school routines e.g. poor results on formative assessment tasks, poor concentration in class, behaviour issues, signs of stress and anxiety



#### Step 5: Take action

- Assign students on this list to specific teachers for daily check-ins to collect more information and provide them with the required supports
- Refer to wellbeing team where additional supports and individual plans are required



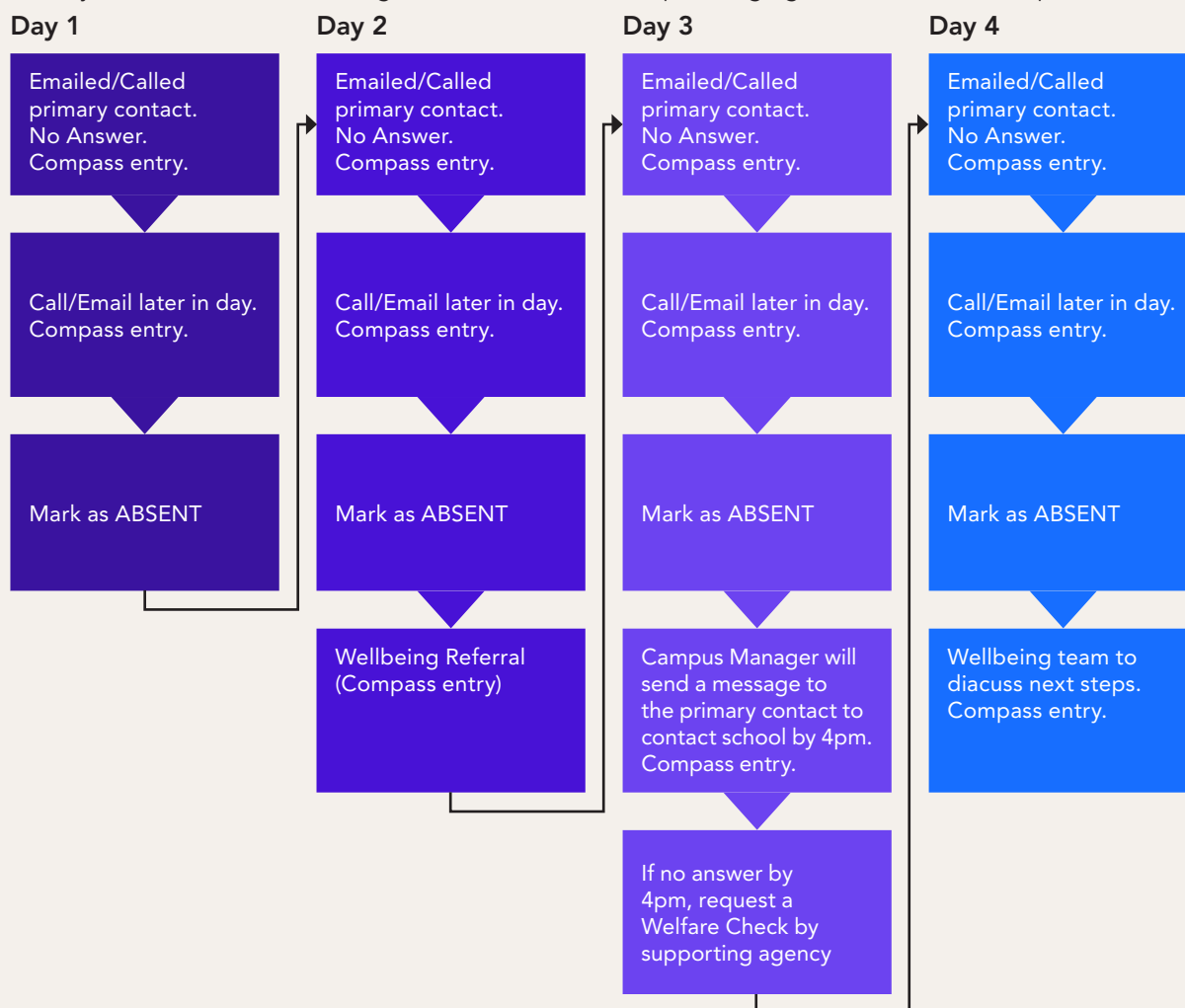
#### Step 6: Monitor and evaluate

- Regularly monitor and update the list of students at-risk of disengagement, capturing student notes, issues arising from check-ins, and any actions taken (e.g. device provided, counselling session attended)
- Review entire list of students at-risk of disengagement, indicators to use and supports provided to students at regular wellbeing team meetings to refine school-wide approaches to identification and support.

## Snapshot from one participating school



Learning from home may require an increased intensity of the absence tracking process. The following flowchart describes how one participating school (a P-12 college with primary and secondary students) identified students who were absent from remote learning, collected and recorded additional information about the students if they demonstrated repeated absences, and then referred students initially to the school's wellbeing team and then to co-operating agencies for a follow-up.



The school adapted their initial process based on feedback from families:

*"We changed our routines for contacting parents – initially, we aimed to contact every parent every day for every child, but parents with multiple children in the school became overwhelmed by four separate phone calls from the school, so we adapted how we contacted some families and had one staff member enquire about all children in the household."*

## Enabling conditions

There are general conditions that support schools to establish effective processes for the early identification of students at risk of disengagement. School leaders interviewed for this paper identified conditions relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic

This paper does not provide detailed instructions for creating these conditions, but it does include some resources as a starting point for schools. Practices, quotes and further resources related to each enabling condition are described below.

### ✓ School leadership and culture that reinforces student engagement and expectations

- A school-wide culture that prioritises the creation of a supportive, inclusive and engaging school environment where all students can engage and learn

*"We were worried about our disengaged and disadvantaged cohort, but educators should challenge their preconceptions of these kids — a number do care about their learning and will engage in remote learning. Our kids were grateful for all the support we provided — remote learning doesn't have to disadvantage disadvantaged kids." – School principal*

Further information:

Improving behaviour in schools  
(Education Endowment Foundation)

### ✓ Positive and interactive relationships with families

- Staff have proactive, positive and trusted relationships with family members
- Staff have up-to-date contact details for all parents and carers, and use multiple channels to communicate
- Following up with families when difficult situations arise

*"We knew who the at-risk students and families were, and we put in a plan from to support them from the beginning." – School principal*

*"We've never had such a close relationship or partnership with our families – it's the best communication with families that I've seen in my career." – School principal*

Further information:

Guidance Report: Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning (E4L)

### ✓ Culturally nourishing engagement with Koorie students and their families

- Schools collaborate with the families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are at risk of disengagement from school to support their engagement in schooling
- Schools facilitate families to exercise their social and cultural capital in support of their children's education, and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency in taking leadership in creating opportunities for meaningful engagement with schools.

*"We highly recommend consulting with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal sources for information. Where available, your Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECCG) is a good first point of contact and Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI) can assist with contacts. Try to work with local community people and Elders, and always respect their intellectual and cultural property rights." – VAEAI*

**Further information:**

Koorie Education Resources (VAEAI)

A systematic review of recent research on the importance of cultural programs in schools, school and community engagement and school leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education (Social Ventures Australia)

### ✓ School collaboration and continuous improvement mechanisms

- Staff have structures, processes, tools and capabilities to collaborate in order to identify students at-risk of disengagement (e.g. regular wellbeing team meetings)
- Staff seek and action frequent feedback, information and input from students, parents and other staff members (e.g. surveys)

*"As a school leader my job is to make sure the processes and systems are in place so that teachers can follow-up on individual students." – School principal*

**Further information:**

Putting evidence to work: a school's guide to implementation (E4L)

### ✓ Remote access to and familiarity with using school technology platforms and tools

- Staff, students and parents have the means (devices, internet connection, ICT support), expertise and experience to access school systems from home (e.g. Student Information Management Systems, surveys, other data collection tools)

*"We are a 1:1 school so our students had devices, but many had technical difficulties. We set up a remote tech support hotline with a 24 hour turnaround and had extra chargers, batteries and other supplies for parents to collect if needed."*

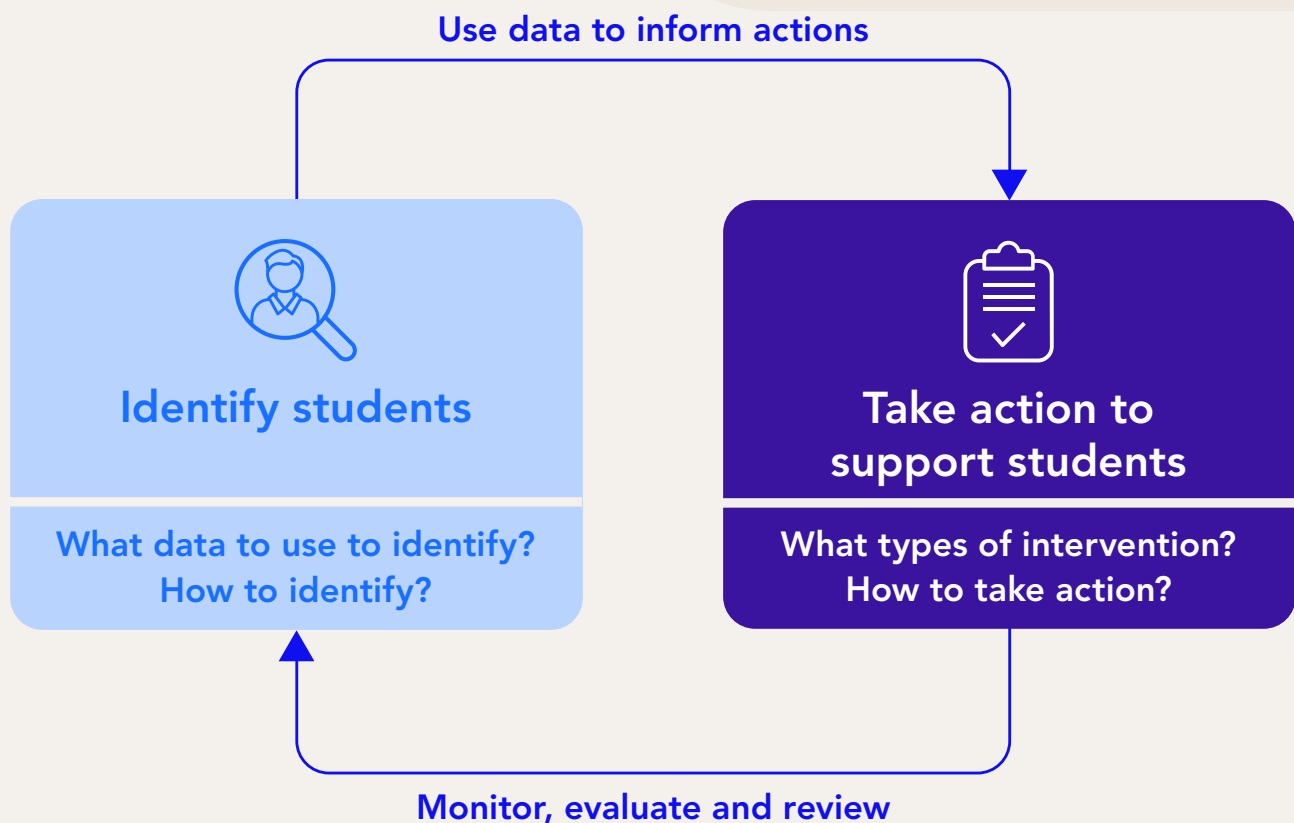
**Further information:**

Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning (Education Endowment Foundation)

Remote Learning Rapid Evidence Assessment (Education Endowment Foundation and E4L)

# 3

## Taking action to support students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases



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## WHAT – the types of support schools can consider during the COVID-19 phases

### Evidence-informed interventions for students at-risk of disengagement

There is less robust evidence on effective interventions for students at risk of disengagement than there is on the predictors of disengagement, particularly in Australian school settings.<sup>1</sup> The Early Action Project suggests that evidence on dropout prevention programs (DPPs) and truancy prevention programs (TPPs) in the United States can provide a starting point. The global literature review from the Early Action Project showed that:<sup>1</sup>

- DPPs can successfully reduce disengagement from school and improve attendance
- TPPs that are run within (as opposed to outside of) the school show more promise for reducing truancy
- DPPs and TPPs that delivered all components of the program in the way they were intended had better outcomes.
- Using more DPPs, or DPPs that include more components, is likely to be more successful than using fewer DPPs or DPPs that contain fewer components.
- DPPs that use at least four different strategies have the best outcomes on disengagement and attendance rates.

### Insights on supports for students at risk of disengagement relevant to the COVID-19 phases

The research studies summarised in the Early Action Project identified effective processes and strategies for students at risk of disengagement. The insights most relevant to the COVID-19 phases suggest that schools should:<sup>1</sup>

- include multi-dimensional approaches or strategies to address a combination of academic performance, attendance, behaviour, study skills, and organisational components of the school structure
- involve mentoring from positive role models who support at-risk students with academic and social issues
- support students to feel successful by helping them to strengthen core academic competencies, social confidence and trust, and by providing a positive environment and opportunities to bond with educators
- provide programs tailored to the student and use the same teachers with small groups of students over time to foster a sense of belonging and enable ongoing monitoring
- include community-based programs appropriate for the individual student
- build relationships with the families of students at risk of disengagement.






## WHAT

Recent Australian and international literature on education during the COVID-19 phases suggests that during the **learning from home phase**, schools should support students at risk of disengagement as follows:<sup>30</sup>

- implement effective remote learning approaches and learning intervention supports that take into account the students' age, ability to learn independently, and technology access and competencies
- provide materials and resources to those students who do not have them, which might include devices, internet connections, desks and chairs, books and stationery, and meals or basic food supplies
- use frequent and personalised communications to parents and students to support engagement in learning from home and gather feedback about what is working, which may include automated text messages about learning engagement, online surveys of both parent and students, emails and phone check-ins
- build a sense of community between students and teachers, and peer-to-peer between students, to promote socio-emotional connections. This could involve real-time or asynchronous connections in an online platform or through phone calls or moderated group chats
- incorporate virtual social and emotional learning and wellbeing into the school's learning from home approach, and connect students at risk of disengagement to virtual allied health and other supports such as online mental health services, telehealth services and phone counselling services.

Figure 6 contains evidence-based recommendations and links to further resources on some of the types of interventions that are important during the COVID-19 phases. Supporting independent learning and parental engagement are important during both **learning from home** and during the **transition and adaption back to school sites**.

**Figure 6: Evidence-based recommendations on effective interventions and supports**<sup>31</sup>

 Evidence-based recommendations on effective interventions and supports	
 <b>Remote learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching quality is more important than the technology used</li> <li>• Access to technology is necessary, but not sufficient if students and teachers do not know how to use the technology</li> <li>• Peer interactions can improve students' learning during remote instruction</li> <li>• Students need strategies and explicit guidance to work independently</li> <li>• Different approaches are needed for different students, content and skills</li> </ul>
 <b>Supporting independent learning (metacognition and self-regulation)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly teach students to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning</li> <li>• Promote and develop metacognitive talk</li> <li>• Explicitly teach students how to organise and effectively manage their learning independently</li> </ul>
 <b>Parental engagement</b>	<p>Communication with parents has the greatest impact when it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to learning</li> <li>• Is tailored for the age of the students</li> <li>• The frequency is appropriate (not too often, but when necessary)</li> <li>• Is personalised to the family and student</li> <li>• Provides families with practical strategies to support their child</li> <li>• Invites families to engage in a two-way conversation</li> </ul>
 <b>Student health and wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellbeing interventions make a difference to student outcomes</li> <li>• Everything that schools do to support student wellbeing counts but some activities are more effective than others such as fostering school belonging and engagement, providing mentoring and building social-emotional skills</li> <li>• To impact academic outcomes, longer programs need to be sustained</li> <li>• Disadvantaged students benefit most from tailored support</li> </ul>



## WHAT

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Pandemic and disaster-related literature suggests that as part of the **transition back to school sites**, schools should prioritise the following, particularly to support students at risk of disengagement:<sup>32</sup>

- provide a safe learning environment by following health and hygiene recommendations and return to a routine to keep things as 'normal' as possible to promote a sense of safety and security
- assess progress of students on return to school sites using reliable formative assessment tools and implement targeted learning interventions to mitigate the impact of learning losses
- support student wellbeing particularly for those students who may be experiencing emotional distress from the pandemic (anxiety, post-traumatic stress symptoms, trauma from family violence), social isolation from friends, poor nutrition due to lack of access to school meals, and lack of physical activity due to changes to physical routines and access to school and social sport
- support the wellbeing of teachers and families, particularly for those experiencing increased levels of stress due to financial stress, health-related worries and increased work and household loads.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has produced an *Initial Guide to Leveraging the Power of Social and Emotional Learning* with actionable recommendations to help school leaders plan for the social and emotional learning needs of all students and adults as school sites reopen following the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>33</sup>

*"There are two main areas that need attention [in relation to effective dropout prevention when school sites reopen].*

*One is academic support. This is where dropout prevention programs really step up. Students who struggle academically might need individual help or tutoring to master the material. These kids really need to have incentives and support to improve their grades.*

*The other is the social-emotional area, of having somebody who cares about them, having a human connection; somebody who is in contact with them frequently, and is encouraging and supportive. We know that having a sense of belonging is key for succeeding in school. It's really hard to make up the kind of personal and social aspects of the learning environment in a distance learning situation." – Emeritus Professor Russell W Rumberger, Director of the California Dropout Research Project, University of California.*

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## What supports are schools providing to students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases?

Taking action with students at risk of disengagement involves:<sup>7</sup>

- activities both within and beyond the school (community level)
- whole-school initiatives to support students (school level)
- whole-school initiatives to train, develop and support school staff (school level)
- targeted supports for at-risk students (student level).

The five participating schools provided, or plan to provide, supports to students during the COVID-19 phases at all these levels. These support strategies have not been reviewed or evaluated for their efficacy.

### Community level

Community level supports are designed to connect students to their local community throughout and beyond their school life.

Prior to COVID-19, a number of school leaders interviewed as part of the Early Action Project were supporting the life-long educational journey of students by collaborating with local businesses, feeder schools and pre-schools, families, and other agencies on programs such as mentoring, kinder transition, and parenting as well as general engagement with families and community members.<sup>7</sup>

*During the learning from home phase of the COVID-19 response, many of the participating schools focussed on parents rather than broader community engagement and significantly increased the frequency and modes of communication with parents.*

Actions taken included:

- Frequent (at least weekly) communication to parents and carers about school news and student learning and wellbeing via multiple channels (phone, email, parent portals, social media, pre-recorded videos)
- Virtual school community events e.g. parent teacher night, virtual tours on Facebook
- Providing information to families on community health and support services, including online and telephone services, especially for parents who may be facing financial stress for the first time and are unaware of the support available.

Most of the participating schools reported significantly increased engagement and thus improved relationships with parents during the learning from home phase, sharing that many families had expressed their gratitude and were now more aware of what their children were learning.

During the **transition back to school sites**, the schools aim to maintain this level of parental engagement by continuing to communicate frequently with parents and sustain their support of their children's education.

## Snapshot from one participating school



Weekly reflection with students, parents and staff: 1000 pieces of feedback every week

Outreach to parents of children with additional needs

'Physically-distant' home visits for parents who were struggling

Extensive social media campaign to keep the sense of community e.g. reminders, online competitions ('iso-challenges')

*"Our parents said that they never felt so engaged in the school. We received unprecedented daily compliments and gratitude from the community." – School principal*

## Staff (whole-school level)

Staff interventions at the school-level are designed to build skills and capacity of all school staff.

Prior to COVID-19, a number of school leaders interviewed as part of the Early Action Project were providing professional development for staff to build knowledge on tools and processes for intervention (e.g. trauma-informed practice) and coordinating regular team meetings between relevant staff to monitor interventions for students at risk.<sup>1</sup>

During the learning from home phase of the COVID-19 response, many of the participating schools prioritised the immediate needs of staff related to professional learning and wellbeing.

On the transition and adaption back in school sites, many school leaders from participating schools intend to continue the virtual wellbeing team and other meetings, finding them useful for collaboration across campuses, a way to prioritise meetings, a means to reduce travel time and a way of giving staff the flexibility of joining from home for staff meetings after school hours.

Actions taken included:

- Continuation of regular team meetings and allocation of professional collaboration time to discuss all at-risk students and share knowledge about how to support them e.g. regular wellbeing team meetings moved to an online format
- Recognising the importance of staff wellbeing, especially for those supporting at-risk students, and nourishing it as best as possible in the circumstances e.g. meditation sessions, reducing length of meetings or providing recorded messages, reducing number of emails, dedicated time for staff reflection and collaboration, leadership check-ins with staff
- Professional learning in online tools to communicate with at-risk students, parents, other staff members and external agencies

## Snapshot from one participating school



*"Our wellbeing team met twice per week as group to brainstorm how to make contact with at-risk students and their parents, share what we knew about how to contact them and how they might be coping in the circumstances."*

*"Our leadership team met regularly and introduced a simple and quick tool (i.e. what to keep, tweak, throw-out, introduce) to review and reflect on what was working to support the learning and wellbeing needs of all students and in particular the most at-risk students. Our leaders then used this tool in their respective professional learning communities – from this we got the feedback that staff wanted to keep the 'home room' structure that we introduced during remote learning to better connect with students."*

## Students (whole-school level)

Student interventions at the school-level are designed to work across the entire school to support all students at risk of disengagement.

School-level interventions should be driven by the information provided by the school data.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to COVID-19, a number of school leaders interviewed as part of the Early Action Project took the following kinds of actions based on issues identified in their data.<sup>7</sup>

- academic progress: implemented school-level assessment and reporting strategies, reviewed pedagogy and curriculum content, created alternative settings and approaches (school-based and external) for at-risk students
- behaviour: implemented a school-wide positive behaviour plan
- wellbeing: appointed a wellbeing team including a qualified social worker to plan school-level programs and intervention processes
- transition: initiated a transition programs with schools to better support students at risk of disengagement during the transition periods when risk of disengagement increases

During the **learning from home phase** of the COVID-19 response, many of the participating schools prioritised support related to the wellbeing and engagement of all students. This support included scheduling dedicated time for student wellbeing and introducing (or re-establishing) time for groups of students to connect with their teachers and peers (e.g. 'home group' structures or wellbeing classes).

The participating schools plan on continuing this focus during **the transition back to school sites**. Most have implemented a specific program for the transition and adaption back to school sites including support for wellbeing, activities to foster connections between peers and ways to reacclimate students back into school routines and structures. A number of the participating schools plan to continue with their scheduled time for wellbeing or 'home group' structures.

## WHAT

Actions taken included:

- Regularly scheduled time for student wellbeing e.g. daily screen free breaks, health and wellbeing afternoon
- Introduce, re-instate or reinforce structures with dedicated time and resources to promote student connections with teachers and with each other e.g. 'home rooms', 'home groups' or wellbeing classes which may be 30 minutes per day
- Systematic allocation of staff to a group of students to ensure every student has one member of staff consistently checking in with them
- Fostering peer connection and engagement via student groups (online or in school on the return to school sites), asking students to check-in with their friends and sharing tools to do so (e.g. RU OK), virtual assemblies, or fun pre-recorded and live videos from teachers especially for practical subjects (e.g. 'cooking demonstration' social media channel)
- Continuation of transition and early intervention programs (e.g. literacy support) with feeder primary schools, shifting them to online where required
- "Welcome back" communications, program and activities e.g. meditation and food trucks on the first day back on school sites, calls to students and families to explain what the return to school sites will look like, re-establishment of routines and structure, reinforcing appropriate classroom learning behaviours

Appendix D contains examples of participating schools' learning from home schedules that include wellbeing and engagement activities and advice.

### Snapshot from one participating school



One participating secondary school has a partnership with two feeder primary schools to identify and address the potential causes of disengagement from an earlier age.

The initiative aims to reduce the chances that Year 7s arrive at the secondary school behind their peers academically, which increases their risk of disengagement.

Using philanthropic funding, secondary school staff assist in the monitoring and early intervention for Year 4 students in two partner primary schools as follows:

- parents of Year 4 students are engaged via a sign-up process
- Year 4 students in the partner primary schools are transported to the secondary school to complete nationally-benchmarked online assessments in literacy and numeracy
- secondary school staff visit the partner primary schools to provide teacher relief time for primary school teachers to plan learning interventions for students that need additional support based on the online assessments
- staff from the schools collaborate on the data and interventions to build knowledge and better support students to succeed in school.

The project also supports transition to secondary school by helping Year 4 students to become familiar with secondary school students, teachers and facilities and by engaging parents early on in their child's learning and transition.

During the COVID-19 phases, the secondary school continued providing this support to the feeder primary schools, shifting to an online model during the learning from home phase.

### Specific students

Student-level interventions involve working directly with selected students at-risk of disengagement and aim to cater more effectively for individual students' needs.

Prior to COVID-19, a number of school leaders interviewed as part of the Early Action Project suggested several interventions such as student support group meetings, 'student voice' meetings, and student self-referrals, Individual Education Plans and other targeted learning supports, student enrolment in flexible learning centres and extra-curricular activities.<sup>7</sup>

During the **learning from home phase**, many of the participating schools provided targeted support related to the needs of specific students at-risk of disengagement, for example, adapting learning approaches to the needs of students and their families, providing essential resources to learn from home, and facilitating one-to-one counselling sessions for those most in need.

Many of the participating schools also plan on providing targeted supports during the **transition and adaption back to school sites**. Many are implementing tailored transition plans to meet specific student needs, including gradual transitions back to the pre-COVID approach, especially for students in outreach programs who may not normally attend a full day of mainstream classes. Others are considering how to continue aspects of online or remote learning programs that worked well for some students, particularly those with autism or anxiety.

Actions taken included:

- Adapting and tailoring learning approaches to students and their family needs e.g. hard copy materials for those that preferred them, transitioning outreach and other alternative education programs to virtual environments
- Providing resources and materials to students without the essentials either via home delivery or school collection points e.g. devices, internet connections, stationery, desks and chairs; prioritising the most at-risk students for this support
- Delivering food packs and groceries to students and or their families most at-risk
- Scheduling additional check-ins for some students, which might include physically-distant home visits for students most at-risk
- Facilitating one-to-one counselling sessions for the most at-risk students, either through the school wellbeing co-ordinator or external agencies
- Implementing tailored transition and adaption plans back in school sites for the most disengaged students e.g. gradual transition from outreach program to mainstream classes, connecting student with one mainstream class teacher in their favourite subject
- Considering how to continue online or blended learning options for students who engaged better with remote learning than face-to-face instruction e.g. create space for online learning in timetable, keep recording videos and mini-lessons for students to revise

## WHAT

### Snapshot from one participating school



The school equipped:

- 120 students with devices
- 50 students with internet connections
- 50 students with desk, chair and stationery packs

They provided the following outreach supports to the most at-risk students:

- Grocery and learning pack deliveries for 30 students in the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD)
- 'Physically distant' (letterbox to front door) home visits for students in our outreach programs
- Letterbox drops of chocolates and other rewards for students in our outreach programs
- Wellbeing team mobile phone, for selected students to have direct contact with wellbeing team member if they needed it

*"Through the State Schools Relief Fund, we ensured every one of our students that applied for a device or other resources received it — they can now keep these assets and will have a better home learning environment than they had before COVID-19." – School principal*



## HOW – the processes and enabling conditions that can support students during the COVID-19 phases

The participating schools offer several insights on implementing a process to assist in ‘taking action’ (providing supports) for students at risk of disengagement.

### Implementing a process for taking action during the COVID-19 phases

Leaders from the participating schools provided the following insights about ‘taking action’ that applies to **learning from home and the transition and adaption back to school sites**:

- Proactively contact students at risk of disengagement and their families to offer support, which might take multiple attempts and various modes of communication, to find out what is most effective in engaging them
- Triage students at risk of disengagement and their needs. An example is using a ‘traffic light’ system to identify the most at-risk students and focus on their immediate needs in the first instance. This might be access to technology or learning packs during first stage of ‘learning from home’; or an initial observation of wellbeing on the return to the school site
- Consider whole school supports that cater for all students as well as targeted supports for those students who need additional assistance
- Recognise the need to prepare for transition to learning from home and the transition and adaption back to school sites to set student expectations and address any technical or other issues e.g. conduct ‘practice runs’ such as a remote learning trial day, schedule time to re-establish routines on the return to school sites
- Revisit previous support initiatives and structures that may now be appropriate in the COVID-19 phases e.g. if the school stopped doing ‘home groups’, they may now provide a way to support engagement with and between students
- Document and share clear expectations to staff and students about what is expected of them during each of the phases e.g. updated position descriptions, student expectations for online

learning, explicitly re-establishing school routines on the transition and adaption back in school sites

- Share the workload between staff by asking for volunteers or reallocating roles for priority tasks – these staff members, for example, could be assigned to a small group of at-risk students to complete check-ins
- Transition and adapt ‘taking action’ processes to a virtual environment, but where possible, keep routines such as team collaboration meetings and connections to local support organisations and agencies to ensure the relevant information is still shared between staff about at-risk students (both during learning from home and the transition back to school sites where health regulations may limit in-person meetings of groups of adults).
- If there is an increase in the number of students at risk of disengagement, especially on the return to school sites, review whether there is sufficient school time and resources to provide support for these students and whether any processes need to be adapted for a higher intensity level of support e.g. more frequent wellbeing team meetings
- Factor staff and student wellbeing into planning of time and resources
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of supports for students by collecting frequent feedback from staff, students, and parents. This includes reviewing what worked during the learning from home phase, especially for those students whose engagement increased, and determining how to implement those lessons on the return to school sites (e.g. blended learning for selected students, increased engagement with parents)



## Enabling conditions

Interviewees from participating schools mentioned several enabling conditions that exist in their school which assisted their process of supporting students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases. Most of these enabling conditions were also raised by school staff in the Early Action Project. Practices, quotes and further resources related to each enabling condition are described below.

### ✓ Access to specialist support staff, school-based wellbeing teams or external agencies

- Wellbeing teams that consist of teachers and allied health workers or other qualified staff such as a social worker or doctors in schools

*"We maintained [virtual] support for our students during learning from home as if they were on our school site." – School principal*

Further information:

Health and wellbeing staff in schools (Victorian DET)

### ✓ Strong pre-existing relationships between students and at least one member of school staff

- Teachers have established a trusted relationship with a student can more effectively support them during learning from home

*"We want to ensure that every child and is known and thought of by an adult in our school." – School principal*

Further information:

Improving behaviour in schools (Education Endowment Foundation)

### ✓ School-wide approach to independent learning and student wellbeing

- Students are familiar with techniques to monitor, direct and review their own learning
- Students know how to access support and are familiar with frameworks and processes to support their physical and mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 phases

*"We developed our continuation of learning plan in consultation with staff, students and parents about a week before we shifted to remote learning. After feedback from staff and students, we added a 'reflect, refresh and repair' day to the timetable." – School principal*

Further information:

Guidance Report: Metacognition and self-regulated learning (E4L)

### ✓ High-quality professional development in skills required to support students at risk of disengagement

- Developing staff capabilities in effective online learning pedagogies, practices and tools for students experiencing vulnerability
- Developing staff capabilities in mental health support and trauma-informed practice for self and students

*"We implemented a comprehensive formal professional development for staff, including 35 formal PD sessions." – School principal*

*"We are considering additional training in trauma-informed practice such as the Berry Street Educational Model." – School principal*

Further information:

Professional learning to support remote learning (Bastow)

Resources to help educators respond to the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Be You)

Remote Professional Development Rapid Evidence Assessment (Education Endowment Foundation)

# Afterword

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Identifying and taking early action for students at risk of disengagement has always been complex and challenging work. This complexity is amplified by the COVID-19 phases and the rapid and significant changes which schools have made as they have transitioned between their normal practices to online or distance learning and a transition and adaption phase in school sites.

Encouragingly – based on the research literature emerging on the pandemic and the experience of the five schools interviewed for this paper – many aspects of addressing disengagement that have always been good practice apply during the COVID-19 phases. The situation offers new opportunities to engage more deeply with online solutions and build richer relationships with parents and carers to better support students at risk of disengagement.

We hope that the combination of insights from the literature and the five participating schools described in this paper will support school leaders in their decision making both during learning from home and the transition and adaption back in school sites.

*“Students at risk of dropping out don’t necessarily have the motivation, the discipline, and the time management skills to succeed purely online, and they may need somebody to push them a little bit, to monitor them, and maybe to set short-term goals with them... What I really think students on the verge of dropping out need is a consistent personal touch. Somebody reaching out to them daily...Students vulnerable to dropping out need to know that they matter.” – Emeritus Professor Russell W Rumberger, Director of the California Dropout Research Project, University of California.*

## Reflection questions



- What are the key indicators of disengagement at each phase of the COVID-19 response that are appropriate to use in my context?
- How can I foster connections between staff and students, and between students, to support their wellbeing during this time?
- Do I need to increase the intensity of processes and allocate additional resources to cater for more at-risk students as a result of the increased risks to learning and wellbeing?
- What worked well during learning at home that we should keep in future to provide enhanced learning and engagement for all – or some — students?
- What enabling conditions do I need in place to identify and support students at risk of disengagement in this context?

# Appendix A: Methodology

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## Global literature review methodology (2018 project)

The literature review produced as part of the Early Action Project in 2018 contained peer-reviewed empirical studies and research-based guidance reports on the identification and early intervention for primary and secondary school-aged students at risk of disengagement from their education. It included works published between 2008–18 in English in Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and the UK.

The process used to complete the literature review involved the identification and screening of 5585 unique citations, full-text review of 167 studies and the subsequent inclusion of 40 studies in the final review. Throughout this process, there was ongoing assessment of quality involving the nature of the publication, the nature of the study design, the methodological characteristics of the study and the nature of the research base.

## Case study investigation methodology (2018 project)

As part of Early Action Project, a case study investigation was conducted of ten Victorian public schools in 2018. The purpose of this investigation was to explore how these schools were identifying and intervening with students at risk of disengagement.

A sample of 10 schools was selected from a list of 15-20 school nominated by project stakeholders to ensure a mix of school types (primary and secondary), geographical locations and socio-economic contexts. A half-day visit was undertaken to each case study school to conduct semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with three or more members of staff. In total, 34 staff were interviewed consisting of current and former school leaders, middle leaders, teachers and support staff.

From the interviews, the research team developed a school-level summary of the key ideas, views and examples articulated by the staff.

## Methodology used to produce this paper (2020)

This paper addresses the research question: “how can students at risk of disengagement be effectively supported when learning from home or in transition and adaptation when back on school sites over the coming months?”

The paper was produced using a three-stage process that prioritised practical insights for schools and leaders as follows:

### (1) Research

- Analysis of relevant literature in the [literature review](#) produced in 2018 to distil relevant findings for the COVID-19 phases
- Analysis of literature included in the [Remote Learning Rapid Evidence Assessment](#) produced in 2020 by the Education Endowment Foundation in partnership with Evidence for Learning to distil findings relevant to identifying and intervening for students at risk of disengagement
- Review and analysis of selected recent academic literature on specific COVID-19 and disaster-related school responses to identify any findings relevant to identifying and intervening for students at risk of disengagement.

### (2) Capture of schools’ experience

- Eight of the case study schools involved in the Early Action Project were invited to take part in interviews to share their approach to identifying and taking action for students at risk of disengagement during the COVID-19 phases. Two new public schools were also invited to participate (one of which had a principal who was part of the original project in 2018; another was recommended by a key informant as a school known for supporting at-risk students)
- In total, seven leaders from five schools were interviewed in May 2020. Thirty to sixty-minute interviews were conducted via videoconference. Three schools were secondary (Year 7-12), one was senior secondary (Year 10-12) and one was a college with primary and secondary (Prep-Year 12). Three were case study schools in the Early Action Project. In each school, the principal was interviewed, and in some cases, other members of the school leadership team attended.

- Interviews were semi-structured and explored questions about:
  - Learning from home
  - General approach to learning and engagement during the phase
  - Approach used to identify students at risk of disengagement including data and process used, as well as enablers and challenges
  - Approach used to take action to support students at risk of disengagement including enablers and challenges
- Plans for the transition back to school sites
  - Plans for learning approach, engagement and following up attendance
  - Any new actions that plan to continue during the transition back
  - Plans for identifying students at risk of disengagement
  - Plans for taking action to support students at risk of disengagement

### (3) Synthesis and production

- Synthesis of the relevant literature combined with the input from education to create a relevant school leader resource.



## Appendix B: Participating schools

	2019 School Data (from MySchool)						COVID approach (April-May 2020)		
	Grade Range	Enrolment	ICSEA	Indigenous Students (%)	LBOTE Students (%)	Attendance (%)	Students onsite*	Students who needed devices or internet*	Learning from home approach
School A	10-12	814	866	9%	7%	90%	4-12	10	MS Teams & Learning Management System
School B	P-12	736	940	7%	4%	87%	15	250	Hard copy packs
School C	7-12	590	954	7%	6%	89%	8-15	170	MS Teams
School D**	7-12	1474	N/A	1.2%	3.4%	N/A	0	0 (1:1 school)	Google
School E	7-12	1058	937	2%	59%	86%	9-11	180	Yr 7-10: Compass & hard copy packs Yr 11-12: Zoom and others

\*Estimate only. LMS = Learning Management System

\*\*New school in 2020, no MySchool data available, available data supplied by school

## Appendix C: Indicators and tools that participating schools used

	Indicators and tools that participating schools used during learning from home						Indicators and tools that participating schools plan on using during transition back to school sites					
Indicators	A	B	C	D	E	Examples	A	B	C	D	E	Examples
Academic progress	✓						✓	✓			✓	Victorian Certificate of Education student progress, VET student progress (practical components)
Attendance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	History of truancy, attendance during learning from home, 'home group' attendance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	History of truancy, attendance during transition back to school sites
Behaviour	✓					Positive behaviours, General student tracking notes	✓					Positive behaviours, General student tracking notes
Personal factors including cultural background, mental health and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	General student tracking notes from check-ins with teachers and wellbeing staff including in 'home groups' and via phone / email / video, International and Australian students without strong English language skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	General wellbeing and dispositions, 1:1 conversations between teachers and students, international students without strong English language skills, mental health issues, physical health (including nutrition and fitness)
Disability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Program for Students with Disability (PSD) students, students with learning difficulties and disability (not in PSD)		✓	✓		✓	PSD students, students with learning difficulties and disability (not in PSD), students with autism and others who engaged better during remote learning
Engagement in learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Login and duration of engagement with online learning platforms*, returned hard copy packs, regular check-ins via phone, number of emails between staff and students	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Teacher perceptions of engagement in learning
Educational aspirations		✓				Engagement in sessions with career pathways teachers						
Family socio-economic status and issues		✓	✓	✓	✓	Families without strong English language skills, students in out of home care, families with a history of family violence or other issues, if needed food and other supplies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Financial stresses on families and student workload in paid employment, students in out of home care, families with a history of family violence, new families facing unemployment

Parental education support and aspirations		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ability to contact parents, attendance at virtual parent teacher nights, number of Facebook subscribers, parents without strong English skills, surveys		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Virtual parent teacher nights, surveys of parents
Other (new category since 2018)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Access to a computer and internet, number of devices and internet connections distributed, access to a desk and other materials						
<b>Tools</b>												
Student Information Management Systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Compass, SIMS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Surveys (parent, student)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Compass surveys, MS Teams forms, Google surveys, phone calls	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Online meeting technologies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Zoom, Webex, Microsoft Teams, Facebook groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Continue use of Zoom, Webex, MS Teams for staff meetings
Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Parent communication channels: Facebook, Compass, phone calls, Webex						

## Appendix D:

# Artefacts from participating schools


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### Footscray High School's staff roles and responsibilities during the learning from home phase (selected)

<b>Leadership Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop plans for remote learning.</li> <li>• Communicate with teachers/staff and parents about teaching and learning, wellbeing, and in relation to Victorian Department of Education and Training updates regarding COVID-19.</li> <li>• Support teachers/staff and parents during Remote Learning.</li> <li>• Ensure effective implementation of Remote Learning plan and accountability to student learning.</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum Area Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with colleagues to design Remote Learning experiences for students in accordance with unit plans.</li> <li>• Check in with each member of your faculty on regular basis</li> <li>• Run 30 minute online Professional Learning Team (PLT) with teachers within your faculty using Google Meet – Tuesdays, Week A, 3.30-4.00pm</li> <li>• Support your team and ensure you run online meetings as per the meeting calendar</li> <li>• Develop high-quality online student learning experiences.</li> <li>• Communicate with and provide timely feedback to students.</li> <li>• Communicate with parents, as necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Specialists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with classroom teachers to accommodate the online learning curriculum they are providing to students.</li> <li>• Check in with teachers on a regular basis</li> <li>• Learning Specialists to assist the design with online curriculum</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow and deliver your timetabled classes daily. Take the roll when in online class.</li> <li>• Develop high-quality online student learning experiences.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver assessment tasks as per assessment schedule for your subject</li> <li>• Continue to collaborate with Curriculum, Learning and Assessment team regarding development of units of work and assessment</li> <li>• Communicate with and provide timely feedback to students.</li> <li>• Communicate with parents, as necessary.</li> <li>• Be available to support student learning during the normal working day</li> </ul>
<b>Wellbeing PLT Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run 30 minute online PLT with teachers within your Wellbeing PLT using Google Meet – Tuesdays Week B, 3.30-4.00</li> </ul>
<b>Wellbeing/Special Needs Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in with students re: self-regulation, anxiety and/or wellness strategies that students can practice during this time of Remote Learning.</li> <li>• Create wellbeing content that students could complete "at home" based on the current curriculum.</li> <li>• Provide Bryan Field bulletin posts statement/s that include resources regarding anxiety, isolation, health and wellbeing particular to individuals.</li> <li>• Ensure students with special needs are assigned their regular aide</li> <li>• Aides to join Google Meet to actively engage in classroom support</li> </ul>
<b>Program Managers, Coordinators and Learning Community Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinators and Learning Community Leaders to monitor attendance</li> <li>• Make follow up calls and emails regarding absences</li> <li>• Program Managers to monitor at risk and case managed students and communicate with wellbeing leaders</li> </ul>
<b>School Psychologist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to counselling needs of students, as needed by contacting the Student Wellbeing and Special Needs Manager who will refer to Student Support Service Officers</li> </ul>



## Footscray High School's student engagement during remote learning survey



The banner features a geometric design with red, dark red, and olive green shapes. It includes the text 'Footscray High School' and 'FEEDBACK FOR LEARNING'.

### FHS – Student Engagement in Remote Learning Survey 2

The purpose of this survey is to gather feedback from you, our students, to help us monitor and evaluate the "Continuation of Learning Plan". Your feedback is valuable and will help us support you while you are learning at home.

\* Required

Email address \*

Your email

Name (optional)

Your answer

Year Level \*

Choose

Year 9

Please consider all of your subjects when answering the questions below. Add any details that you want to about your remote learning experience in the final question.

I am able to access learning tasks and materials that my teacher sends me online easily. \*

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Disagree

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

The amount of work that I am expected to do at home is manageable. For example, I have enough time to complete tasks by the due date. \*

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Disagree

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

The instructions that I receive for learning tasks are clear and easy to follow while at home. \*

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Disagree

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

I submit all learning tasks that I am given \*

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Disagree

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

I receive feedback on the tasks that I complete while at home. \*

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Disagree

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

The feedback I receive is helpful \*

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Disagree

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Strongly Agree

How many hours did you spend in front of a screen for school work in the past 24 hours? \*

Choose ▼

How many hours did you spend in front of a screen for non- educational purposes in the past 24 hours? (TV, social media, You Tube, streaming, gaming, online shopping, ect) \*

Choose ▼

In the past 24 hours how many minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity did you accumulate? \*

Choose ▼

Please add any comments or feedback that you have on remote learning

Your answer

☐


 Send me a copy of my responses.

Back

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

## Seymour College's guide to learning at home that features values and advice on home learning environments and wellbeing



### OFFSITE LEARNING GUIDE

#### A GUIDE TO LEARNING FROM HOME

- **RESPECT**- Respect yourself and your family during this time. Please remember your health and wellbeing is important. Respect your privacy and please do not Webex from your bedroom.
- **INSPIRE**- Inspire others by sharing what you have learned, motivate each other by regularly checking in.
- **EXCEL**- Excel by continuing your learning. Don't give up and remember to check in with your teacher when required. We are here to help.

#### SETTING UP YOUR WORK SPACE

- Find a **quiet**, comfortable place.
- Have materials **ready**- books, pens, pencils, calculator etc
- **Charge** your devices or have access to power.
- Don't forget to **stand up** and stretch.
- Wear **comfortable and appropriate clothing**, this includes when you use Webex.
- Check **Compass** for the daily work schedule.
- Check **emails** regularly - Staff will reply to emails within 24 hours (weekdays).

#### INDEPENDENT STUDY

- Read a book, magazine, newspaper.
- **Read ahead in your text book or novel.**
- Watch a documentary
- **Revise key knowledge and skills**
- Talk to someone about what you've learned recently

#### STAY HEALTHY

- Drink plenty of **water** and have **healthy snacks** ready.
- **Check in** with your friends.
- Get plenty of **sleep**.
- **Take recess and lunch breaks**- stand up, give your brain a rest.
- **Focus** on what you can
- Wellbeing support: Trish Bullus 5771 1300
- Smiling Mind App

## Sunshine College's daily task planner and advice for Year 7-10 students

**While working from home, stick to a structured routine.**  
Sunshine College expects you to do the following:

**Keep healthy**

- Your brain needs energy, so give it good 'fuels' to run on. Eat a healthy breakfast.
- Drink water regularly. Water hydrates your brain and body and lowers stress.
- If you're stuck at home, make sure you exercise a few times a week.
- Challenge yourself to become healthier.

**Keep connected**

- If you are isolated from your friends, it is easy to think that they are having a wonderful time and you're not. Reach out to others. Invite them to have conversations with you. Share ideas or jokes.
- Use social media responsibly and don't get "sucked in" by fake news. We can get the wrong ideas about what's happening by believing fake news.

**Keep happy**

- Listen to music, play a musical instrument, watch a video, do some art work, cook food, go for a walk.
- Play with your brothers and sisters and make mum and dad happy, do some chores.
- If you are feeling down, you need to talk to someone. If you can't think of someone to talk to, we've provided some numbers on the planner page

**Keep purpose**

Set yourself some personal goals around what you want to achieve while not at school:

- I will get better at...
- I will become...
- I will...

**Keep note**

In 2020 students in schools will be learning about and studying what happened in society in 2020 when the COVID-19 virus caused closures of schools and people hoarded toilet paper.

Keep a scrapbook, diary, sketchbook or a video on what you did while not at school (this could be short notes, sketches, cartoon, or more detailed - up to you!)

Daily task planner

Ideas for your daily planner:

**Home**



- Do the dishes
- Tidy your room
- Help with your brothers and sisters
- Help with pets

**Health**




- Eat a nutritious breakfast
- Eat fruit and vegetables
- Do some sit ups
- Go for a walk

**Wellbeing**



- Connect with friends
- Do something you enjoy
- Read a book
- Get a good night's sleep

**School**




- Check your timetable for the day's tasks
- Complete the tasks set for that day
- File your work (on your computer, or printed sheets in a folder)
- Share your work with teachers on Compass



Daily task planner

Split your day into 4 parts, and list your tasks for the day in the box:

**Home**




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**Health**




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**Wellbeing**




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**School**



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**How to get help:**

Check Compass, or call the Senior Campus: (03) 8311 5200  
Email the school: [sunshine.co@sunshine.vic.edu.au](mailto:sunshine.co@sunshine.vic.edu.au)

**Parent Help Line** 1300 301 300  
**Kids Help Line** 1800 551 800 <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>  
**Beyond Blue Help Line** 1300 224 636  
**Lifeline** 13 11 44  
**Ask Izzy** <https://askizzy.org.au/?state=vic>

## Western Port Secondary College's Learning Guarantee Project that takes early action to support primary school students

### Background

For some years, Western Port Secondary College has been advocating for placed-based integrated support for young people from six months old to 18 years old – essentially a local precinct with co-located services covering education, health, and well-being. The education side of this model is similar to a "learning guarantee", for example "we will make certain the learning stays on track, provide education/learning intervention when and as needed". The other aspect to this model is the health, well-being and emotional support provided by co-located service in a 'wrap-around care' model. The 'Learning Guarantee Project' puts in place scaled-down and modified version of aspects of the full model.

### Project aim

The project aims to provide a 'learning guarantee' to a mixed cohort of 20–30 Year 4 students in three feeder primary schools that they will be at or above the expected level in literacy and numeracy by Year 10 and prior to undertaking a senior VCAL or VCE pathway.

Currently about 70% of students are below the expected level both at Year 7 and again at Year 10. Research indicates the earlier the intervention the better and under the ideal model this is preschool and pre foundation, but for the feasibility of this project the target cohort is Year 4. NAPLAN trends indicate that the downward trajectory that occurs for students from Year 3 increases at Years 5 and 7 and flat lines or slightly reduces to Year 9. This would indicate there is still an opportunity for significant impact starting at this level.

During the period of the 'guarantee', the project monitors learning levels and collaboratively works with teachers to develop appropriate and meaningful education and learning interventions where necessary to ensure targets are met so that ultimately the 'guarantee' can be met.

As many students' education is impacted by factors beyond the control of the teachers and schools, the project also aims to identify and resolve external factors by working with community groups, programs and other agencies. Examples of this could include sport and exercise, healthy diet, appropriate environments for homework, agency support for family crisis, mental health interventions, parenting support etc.

### Project phases

#### Phase 1: Research planning and preparation

- Evaluation and research of best practice models that successfully incorporate learning guarantees, strong community involvement, and 'wrap around' care
- Development of the formal guarantee offered to parents of the students in the cohort
- Development of the data and evaluation model, including one primary data piece plus a couple of secondary data sets, for example, ACER's PAT tests as the primary data source
- Provision of professional development on the data used for the 'guarantee' and how it will inform teacher practice to achieve the best results
- Documentation of the role of the project co-ordinator.

### **Phase 2: Implementation, action, and refinement**

- Allocation of one hour per week for the project co-ordinator to monitor, collate data, evaluate, and co-ordinate what will essentially be the Individual Learning Plan for each student in the guarantee
- Collaboration between the co-ordinator, principal, and staff to develop a response to the external impacts on student learning outcomes (e.g. liaising with external agencies to help provide solutions)
- Review whether parent buy-in to a 'guarantee' provides more effective opportunities to build their capacity to support their students learning under the guise of achieving the 'guarantee'.


### **Phase 3: Evaluation and outcomes**









- Ongoing review of the data by the project co-ordinator, with the agreed primary and secondary data sets collated twice a year
- Regular monitoring, tracking and reporting on which factors impacting students learning were identified either individually or as a cohort, what the response provided to these factors was and what the impact of that response was observed or measured.
- Annual update to key project partners on the progress of students
- Final evaluation on the number of students that completed the 'guarantee' and of those the number that were considered by the determined data sets to be at or above the expected level at Year 10.



## Wodonga Senior Secondary College's remote learning timetable focussed on wellbeing

**WODONGA SENIOR SECONDARY COLLEGE**  
*Every Student, Every Opportunity, Success for All*

**Remote Learning – Supporting our students**  
*The structure for Remote Learning at Wodonga Senior Secondary College is designed to balance the following student needs to ensure that every student is supported to be successful.*

 <b>Mental health &amp; wellbeing</b>	 <b>Safety &amp; security</b>	 <b>Physical health</b>
 <b>Connectedness &amp; community</b>	<b>Student needs in remote learning</b>	 <b>Engagement with learning</b>
 <b>Metacognition &amp; self-regulation</b>	 <b>Academic learning &amp; growth</b>	 <b>Aspirations &amp; pathways</b>

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More information on Wodonga Senior Secondary College's approach to remote learning can be found in ACER's Teacher Magazine article entitled "[Learning in lockdown – rural schools](#)" by Michael Rosenbrock.





## WODONGA SENIOR SECONDARY COLLEGE

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### Remote Learning – Student Timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.55am-9.55am	Virtual classes (E)	Virtual classes (F)	Virtual classes (D)	Virtual classes (B)	Virtual classes (C)
9.55am-10.35am	Screen free break				
10.35am-11.35am	Graduate Program Virtual Class	Virtual classes (C)	Virtual classes (B)	Graduate Program Scheduled Assemblies	Virtual classes (F)
11.35am-11.55am	Screen free break				
11.55am-12.55pm	Virtual classes (D)	Virtual classes (A)	Health & wellbeing afternoon	Virtual classes (A)	Virtual classes (E)
12.55pm-2.05pm	Lunch break				
2.05pm-3.20pm	Independent learning time	Independent learning time	Health & wellbeing afternoon	Independent learning time	Independent learning time

**Virtual classes** – Students and teachers connect via MS Teams for one-hour sessions starting at the same time as the regular timetable. This includes up to 30 minutes of direct teaching and the remainder in collaborative learning facilitated by the classroom teacher.

**Independent learning time** – Students work independently on home study and revision for their classes. Students may choose to complete this work at alternate times to allow them to fulfil other roles and take care of themselves. Teachers use this time to provide feedback to students using MS Teams and SIMS.

**Health and wellbeing afternoon** – Students are strongly encouraged to take a break from screen time in the middle of the week to refresh and recharge. Teachers use this time to provide feedback to students using MS Teams and SIMS.

**Screen free breaks and lunch break** – Students and teachers are strongly encouraged to ensure that they take regular breaks during screen-based learning. Student Leadership Council will run activities for students during lunch breaks to support student connection, health & wellbeing.

**Graduate Program** – Students join their Graduate Program class using MS Teams every Monday. Graduate Program teachers check-in with each student individually during the week to ensure they are supported and connected during remote learning.

**Scheduled virtual assemblies** – House and Year Level assemblies will be run using MS Teams as required during Graduate Program on Thursdays.

*Note: Some Trade Block classes and the Tutorial Program will continue to run on a different schedule. Students involved will be contacted directly.*

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## WODONGA SENIOR SECONDARY COLLEGE

*Every Student, Every Opportunity, Success for All*

### Remote Learning – Detailed Session Guide

Session	Student Need Focus	Students	Teachers
Virtual Classes	Engagement, Academic Learning, Metacognition	Students and teachers connect via MS Teams for one-hour sessions starting at the same time as the regular timetable. This includes <b>up to 30 minutes of direct teaching</b> and the remainder in collaborative learning facilitated by the classroom teacher. Attendance is recorded on SIMS for each class.	
Independent learning time	Academic Learning, Metacognition	Students work independently on home study and revision for their subjects. <b>Formal classes do not run at these times. Additional classwork is not set for this time.</b> Students may choose to complete this work at alternate times to allow them to fulfil other roles and take care of themselves. Attendance is <b>not</b> taken for this session.	Teachers use this time to provide feedback to students using MS Teams and SIMS. <b>Additional class work is not set for students to complete during this time – it is focused on independent home study and revision.</b> Specific support and conferencing sessions may be run for students as applicable, including existing support programs.
Health and wellbeing afternoon	Wellbeing, Physical Health	Students are strongly encouraged to take a break from screen time in the middle of the week to refresh and recharge. Attendance is <b>not</b> taken for this session.	Teachers use this time to provide feedback to students using MS Teams and SIMS.
Screen free breaks	Wellbeing, Physical Health	Students and teachers are strongly encouraged to ensure that they take regular breaks during screen-based learning. The Student Leadership Council will run activities for students during breaks to support student connection, health & wellbeing.	
Lunch break	Wellbeing, Physical Health		
Graduate Program Virtual Class (Monday)	Wellbeing, Connectedness, Engagement, Pathways	Students join their Graduate Program class using MS Teams every Monday.	Teachers run a virtual session at the start of the scheduled Monday Graduate Program class using MS Teams.
Graduate Program Check in and Optional Programs (Thursday)	Wellbeing, Connectedness, Engagement, Pathways	Students will be contacted by their teacher during the week to ensure they are supported and connected during remote learning. Attendance is <b>not</b> taken for this session. Optional programs to support students may be offered in this time. Where applicable, students will continue with Impact Projects to support their pathways.	Graduate Program teachers check-in with each student individually during the week. Optional programs to support students accessed via external partnerships may be offered in this time.
Scheduled virtual assemblies	Connectedness, Engagement, Pathways	House and Year Level assemblies will be run using MS Teams <b>as required</b> during Graduate Program on Thursdays. Students will be notified in MS Teams when an assembly is scheduled.	

*Note: Some Trade Block classes and the Tutorial Program will continue to run on a different schedule. Students involved will be contacted directly.*

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## Notes

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