

4.2 A supportive classroom environment

Students require different levels and types of support to assist them with their learning and to enable their ongoing engagement with education. Teachers or school staff proactively provide support for learning through embedding support within learning experiences, in response to student requests or as additional programs. Teachers who create a classroom in which students feel comfortable to make mistakes and do not fear negative repercussions facilitate engagement.⁹⁹

Survey findings

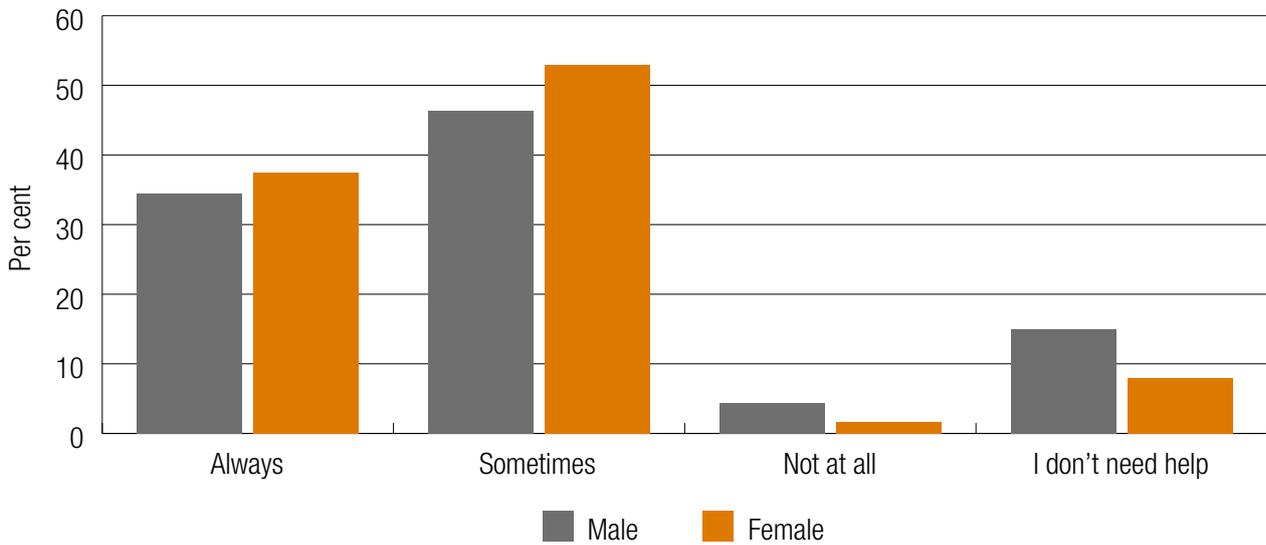
- 36 per cent of Year 3 to Year 6 students reported that they ‘always’ get the help they need to do their school work. 50 per cent answered ‘sometimes’.
- 46 per cent of Year 7 to Year 12 students reported that they ‘usually’ get the help they need to do their school work. 38 per cent answered ‘sometimes’.
- 11 per cent of Year 7 to Year 12 students said they ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ get the help they need.

Do students get the help they need?

Just over one-third of Year 3 to Year 6 students reported that they ‘always’ get the help they need to do their school work. One-half answered ‘sometimes’ and around three per cent of students said ‘not at all’. The remainder – 11.0 per cent – answered that they do not need help.

Girls were somewhat more likely than boys to say that they get help ‘always’ or ‘sometimes’ (90.4% versus 80.7%). Boys on the other hand were more likely to report that they do not get help ‘at all’ (4.3% versus 1.6%) and significantly more likely to say that they do not need help (15.0% versus 8.0%).

Graph 4.3: Proportion of Year 3 to Year 6 students saying they get the help they need to do their school work always, sometimes, not at all or they don’t need help, by gender



A higher proportion of students in regional areas than metropolitan areas reported that they ‘always’ get the help they need but the difference was not statistically significant (38.7% versus 34.5%). Students in metropolitan areas, however, were significantly more likely to say that they do not need help (13.4% versus 7.3%).

Aboriginal students were less likely than non-Aboriginal students to report that they ‘always’ get the help they need with only one in four Aboriginal students saying this (26.0% compared to 37.2%). Most Aboriginal students answered that they get help ‘sometimes’ (63.0%).

Table 4.3: Proportion of Year 3 to Year 6 students saying they get the help they need to do their school work always, sometimes, not at all or they don’t need help, by selected characteristics

	Male	Female	Metropolitan	Regional	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	All
Always	34.4	37.5	34.5	38.7	37.2	26.0	36.2
Sometimes	46.3	52.9	49.5	51.1	48.9	63.0	50.1
Not at all	4.3	1.6	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.7
I don’t need help	15.0	8.0	13.4	7.3	11.2	8.2	11.0

When asked what type of help students need, the most commonly mentioned answer for Year 3 to Year 6 boys and girls was ‘my teacher to explain it’ (57.8% of students said this) followed by ‘more time to complete my work’ (38.5% of mentions).

Among Year 7 to Year 12 students, less than one-half (45.7%) of respondents reported that they ‘usually’ get the help they need to do their school work while 38 per cent answered they get help ‘sometimes’. One in 10 Year 7 to Year 12 students (10.7%) said they ‘hardly ever’ or ‘not at all’ get the help they need. The remainder – six per cent – answered that they do not need help.

There was no significant difference found between the genders or students in regional and metropolitan areas.

However, a significantly smaller proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal Year 7 to Year 12 students reported they ‘usually’ get the help they need (34.1% compared to 46.5%).

Graph 4.4: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they get the help they need to do their school work usually, sometimes, hardly ever, not at all or they don’t need help, by Aboriginal status

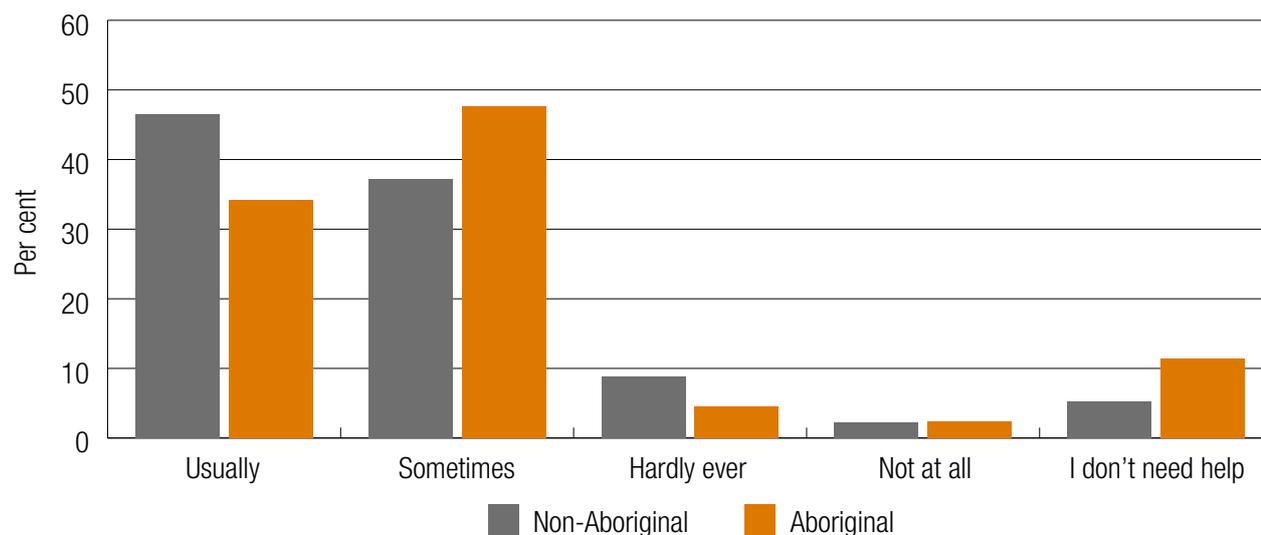


Table 4.4: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they get the help they need to do their school work usually, sometimes, hardly ever, not at all or they don't need help, by selected characteristics

	Male	Female	Metropolitan	Regional	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	All
Usually	45.3	46.5	45.8	45.7	46.5	34.1	45.7
Sometimes	36.8	38.6	37.7	38.5	37.2	47.7	37.9
Hardly ever	8.4	8.2	8.3	9.1	8.8	4.5	8.5
Not at all	1.8	2.6	3	0.5	2.2	2.3	2.2
I don't need help	7.7	4.1	5.3	6.3	5.3	11.4	5.6

When asked what type of help students need, the most commonly mentioned answer for both male and female Year 7 to Year 12 students was 'more explanations' followed by 'more time to complete tasks or assignments' and 'talking to the teacher'.

Table 4.5: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they require help, by type of help

Type of help	All
More explanations	65.3
More time to complete tasks or assignments	41.7
Talking to the teacher	38.0
Tutoring	15.0
I don't need help	11.4
Other help	7.3

All Year 7 to Year 12 survey participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that at their school 'Teachers go out of their way to help students'. More than 60 per cent of Year 7 to Year 12 students agreed with this, 26 per cent were unsure and 13 per cent disagreed.

Students who get along with teachers

Compared to students who said they get along with their teachers 'sometimes', those who said they get along with their teachers 'always' (Year 3 to Year 6) or 'usually' (Year 7 to Year 12) were more likely to say that they get the help they need to do their school work:

- Year 3 to Year 6 students say they 'always' get the help they need (48.5% versus 19.3%).
- Year 7 to Year 12 students say they 'usually' get the help they need (53.6% versus 22.7%).

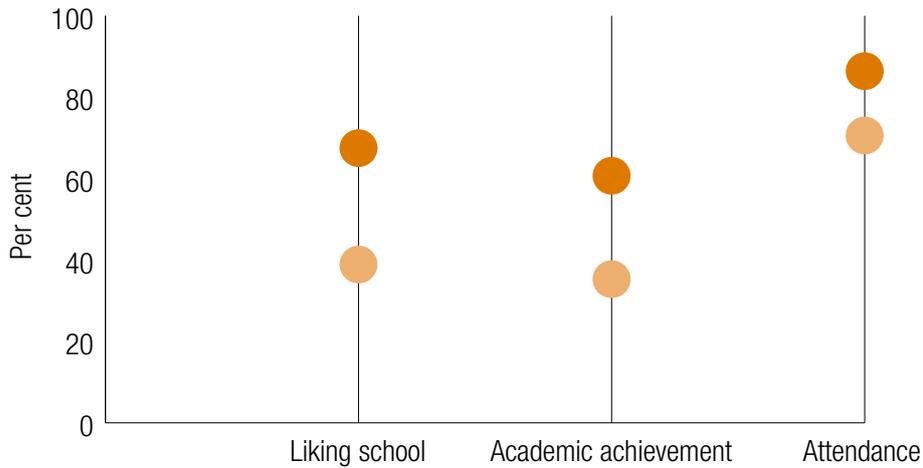
Students who get the help they need

Students who said they 'always' (Year 3 to Year 6) or 'usually' (Year 7 to Year 12) get the help they need to do their school work were more likely than students who get help 'sometimes' to positively rate other aspects of their school experience. Most importantly they were more likely to achieve higher academically.

For Year 3 to Year 6 students:

- Students like school 'a lot' (67.5% versus 38.9%).
- Students say they do 'well or very well' in their school results (60.7% versus 35.3%).
- Students say being at school every day is 'very important' to them (86.4% versus 70.6%).

Graph 4.5: Selected engagement indicators for Year 3 to Year 6 students saying they get the help they need *always* or *sometimes*

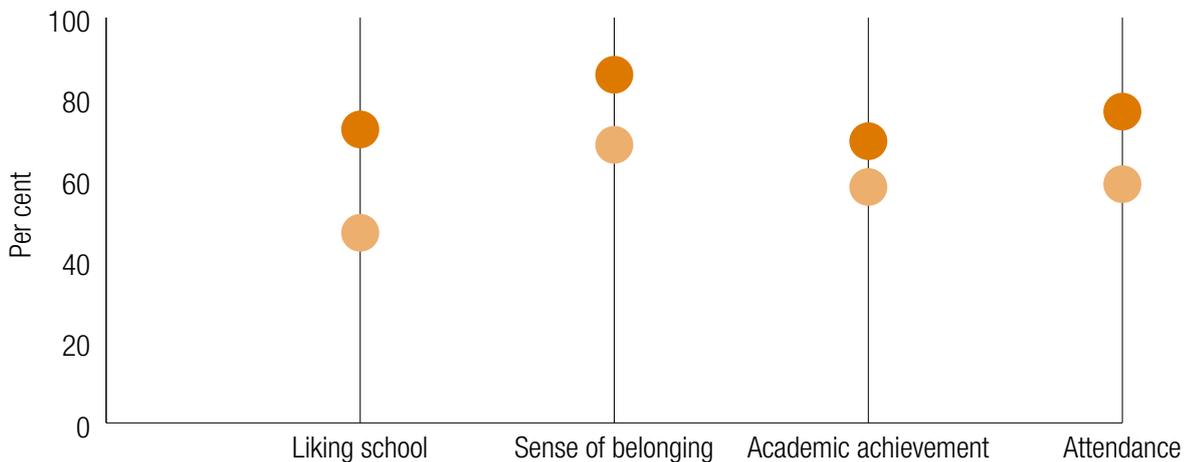


Note: Liking school includes students who said they like school 'a lot', academic achievement includes students who said they do 'well or very well' in their school results and attendance includes students who said it is 'very important' to them to be at school every day.

For Year 7 to Year 12 students:

- Students like school 'a lot' or 'a bit' (72.4% versus 46.9%).
- Students feel part of their school (85.9% versus 68.6%).
- Students achieve 'above average' or 'near the top' in their school results (69.5% versus 58.2%).
- Students say being at school every day is 'very important' to them (76.8% versus 58.9%).

Graph 4.6: Selected engagement indicators for Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they get the help they need *usually* or *sometimes*



Note: Liking school includes students who said they like school 'a lot' or 'a bit', sense of belonging includes students who said they feel like they are part of their school, academic achievement includes students who said they achieve 'above average' or 'near the top' in their school results and attendance includes students who said it is 'very important' to them to be at school every day.

Students who ‘don’t need help’

It is important to take a closer look at those students who said that they ‘don’t need help’ (11.0% of Year 3 to Year 6 students and 5.6% of Year 7 to Year 12 students).

Year 3 to Year 6 students who reported not needing help were less likely than students who ‘always’ get the help they need to say that they like school ‘a lot’ (38.8% versus 67.5%), and more likely to say that they don’t like school (11.7% versus 0.8%).

Year 3 to Year 6 students saying they don’t need help were also less likely to say that they always get along with their teachers (44.7% versus 79.3%).

In regard to academic achievement, however, Year 3 to Year 6 students saying they don’t need help were more likely than students who ‘always’ get the help they need to report achieving ‘well or very well’ in their school results (75.0% versus 60.7%).

Table 4.6: Proportion of Year 3 to Year 6 students saying they like school a lot, a bit, school is OK or they don’t like school/don’t like school at all, by whether they get the help they need to do school work

	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	I don’t need help
Likes school a lot	67.5	38.9	28.6	38.8
Likes school a bit	20.7	31.4	19.0	21.2
Thinks school is OK	11.1	25.8	33.3	28.2
Doesn’t like school or not at all	0.8	3.9	19.1	11.7

Similar to Year 3 to Year 6 students, Year 7 to Year 12 students who said they don’t need help were more likely than students who said they ‘usually’ get the help they need to report achieving results that are ‘above average’ or ‘near the top’ (89.5% versus 69.5%).

However, unlike the younger cohort, Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they don’t need help were:

- about equally likely as students who ‘usually’ get the help they need to say that they like school ‘a lot’ (39.5% compared to 44.7%)
- equally likely to report positive relationships with teachers (92.1% of students not requiring help ‘usually’ get along with teachers compared to 89.7 per cent of students who ‘usually’ get the help they need).

Table 4.7: Proportion of Year 7 to Year 12 students saying they like school a lot, a bit, school is OK or they don’t like school/don’t like school at all, by whether they get the help they need to do school work

	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly ever or not at all	I don’t need help
Likes school a lot	44.7	20.9	19.2	39.5
Likes school a bit	27.7	26.0	12.3	31.6
Thinks school is OK	23.5	38.8	38.4	21.1
Doesn’t like school or not at all	4.2	14.3	30.1	7.9

Group discussion findings

“Kids need help when they struggle at home or at school.” (Year 7 to Year 12)

When discussing the help and support students need, the overwhelming majority of comments from students across Year 3 to Year 12 referred to support for learning and to increasing interest in learning. Students articulated a variety of strategies to support learning progress and interest in learning, including changes to pedagogy, the social environment, teacher and student behaviours and the need for school and learning to be inclusive of the diversity of students.

Students described the varying ways in which friends, peers and school staff supported learning. Critically, relationships with others affected students’ level of comfort when seeking help for learning. They explained that:

- quality interpersonal relationships with friends and teachers facilitated, promoted and provided support for learning
- positive and supportive classroom environments and relationships encouraged help-seeking behaviour.

“We need to know that there are people who care if we pass or fail.” (Year 7 to Year 12)

There were many difficulties students faced in accessing support for learning. The accessibility and availability of support systems often complicated student’s ability to receive help that met their needs. Within the classroom, students noted that the behaviour of other students affected the availability of teachers. They also discussed how the perceptions of friends, other students and teachers, the practices of teachers, or feelings of stress and pressure sometimes precluded them from requesting help with learning. Finally, the cost, location or availability impeded or prohibited some students from getting help and support. Many of these barriers were also discussed by students regarding support more generally – as discussed in Chapter 4.7 – Help to overcome personal issues.

“We should have a good access to education and support.” (Year 7 to Year 12)

Students provided suggestions for overcoming some of these barriers. Their suggestions are detailed throughout and at the conclusion of the chapter.

Types of support for learning

Pedagogical changes and additional assistance were common themes among students across Year 3 to Year 12 in response to the question, ‘What help or support do kids need?’

Variety in teaching methods, with an emphasis on active pedagogies, was noted by students as a way to make learning more interesting and thereby facilitating engagement. The suggestions from students mirrored the strategies discussed in Chapter 4.3 – Teaching and learning that is interesting – that is, learning that was hands-on, interactive, tailored to their needs and interests, and in which they had options or choice were more likely to engage students. Breaks from learning, clear explanations and encouragement and recognition were also important strategies for concentration, persistence and motivation. Students were better positioned to engage in learning when they found the experience interesting and understood what they should be doing.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“Being interactive and having someone to help you.”</i></p> <p><i>“A teacher who explains the work well will help all the students understand and not worry about what they have to do.”</i></p> <p><i>“When they know that the day has fun things planned for the day.”</i></p> <p><i>“When it’s more interactive.”</i></p> <p><i>“Group discussions.”</i></p> <p><i>“Kids need a good amount of time to finish their work because some people are a bit slow.”</i></p>	<p><i>“They need to explain it more than once.”</i></p> <p><i>“Teachers who understand different learning types (visual, writing etc.).”</i></p> <p><i>“Different methods for learning to suit all students e.g. visual for students who learn visually.”</i></p> <p><i>“Teachers to make the lessons more interesting.”</i></p> <p><i>“Interactive games to help us learn because they make the class fun.”</i></p> <p><i>“Kids need to learn in an active way.”</i></p> <p><i>“Encouragement to do well in work.”</i></p>

Additional assistance that met the different needs of students was frequently identified by students across Year 3 to Year 12. Suggestions included tutoring, specialised sessions or programs within the school, additional school staff and tailored or individualised support. Students recognised that tutoring opportunities could be provided by private tutors, their friends or other students and could be both formal and informal. Students in Year 7 to Year 12 said they would welcome specialised sessions for tests or assignments and homework programs provided by the school. Additional and specialised teachers, including Aboriginal Teacher Assistants and assistants for students with disability, were also noted. Language assistance or translators would support students moving from remote communities and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“Send them a personal teacher to help them out.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some kids need tutoring because they are not the best at learning.”</i></p> <p><i>“They might need a tutor so they can get good grades and learn more about stuff and not just learn stuff from the teachers.”</i></p> <p><i>“If kids have missed out on a lot of school and they are falling behind it’s good for teachers and even other kids to help them get back up there.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Tutoring: learning support – cheaper (one-on-one) – specialised programs – included with school.”</i></p> <p><i>“More support teachers to help the struggling students.”</i></p> <p><i>“More helper teachers to stand at the back of the room and help us with individual stuff.”</i></p> <p><i>“Someone always checking on you and your work so if you get the question wrong they can help you with it.”</i></p> <p><i>“One-on-one time with other upper school students.”</i></p>

Enablers to support for learning

“If I don’t understand the work I will get help from them [family members] and if they don’t understand it I will get help from my teachers.” (Year 7 to Year 12)

Quality interpersonal relationships and supportive classroom environments created situations in which students felt help was readily available and comfortable in seeking help.

Friends and teachers were both noted as providing direct support for learning and promoting persistence with learning. Learning both with and from friends was significant for students – and is discussed further in Chapter 3.1 – Having friends and positive relationships with other students. Students preferred teachers who were approachable and readily provided support for learning. When teachers were proactive and interested in providing assistance, students explained it supported their learning, reduced anxiety, facilitated experiences of success and contributed to positive relationships. Students in Year 7 to Year 12 acknowledged and appreciated the willingness of teachers to provide help to students outside of class. The challenges for teachers in providing assistance to everyone in the class were also noted by students, with reference to the number and diversity of students in a class and disruptive behaviour of other students. The ways in which teachers provide support for learning is discussed further in Chapter 3.2 – Teachers who have a genuine interest in our wellbeing and future.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“Yes because they [friends] could make you happy and they can help you with work.”</i></p> <p><i>“So they can help you in class.”</i></p>	<p><i>“They will help you with homework.”</i></p> <p><i>“You can help your friends/classmates with work.”</i></p>
<p><i>“They [teachers] help you if you don’t know what to do.”</i></p> <p><i>“She helps me with things when I am stuck and helps me understand things better.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Good teachers: help you in all areas – need different ways to teach different students.”</i></p> <p><i>“When teachers are dealing with disruptive students, must remember that other students are there.”</i></p> <p><i>“Our favourite teacher is someone who helps us.”</i></p>

External to the classroom, family members were also noted as providing support for learning. Students described how family members assisted with prescribed work and additional opportunities or resources for learning (such as hiring a tutor, creating learning tools or opportunities and encouraging learning behaviours). Additionally, family members contributed to a home environment that supported learning. While students largely felt supported by family members, they also acknowledged a range of social and economic factors can influence the provision of support. Students in Year 7 to Year 12 felt it beneficial for schools to provide support for homework and homework programs, particularly when support was not consistently available within the home environment. The ways family members support engagement with learning and school is discussed further in Chapter 3.3 – Families that are involved and interested.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“By helping you with your homework because if you can’t do it there is no point getting homework.”</i></p> <p><i>“Help with work that is due soon and you don’t have a clue how to do it.”</i></p> <p><i>“They can be quiet.”</i></p> <p><i>“Set a good example.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Families can help their children with homework/ assignments if needed and make sure that they are not falling behind in class.”</i></p> <p><i>“Parents and older siblings help us do homework.”</i></p> <p><i>“Creating a learning space.”</i></p> <p><i>“Enough time to do work out of school.”</i></p>

The classroom environment influenced student help-seeking behaviour. Students explained how the behaviours and actions of peers, friends and teachers contributed to the classroom environment. This included teacher response to disruptive students and behaviour management generally. Positive and supportive classroom environments were characterised by kindness, positivity and no fear or judgements. As discussed further below, fear of being judged, labelled or teased sometimes impeded student help-seeking behaviour. Positive and supportive classroom environments are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.1 – A positive and fair classroom environment.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“Being nice to others.”</i></p> <p><i>“Good people.”</i></p>	<p><i>“When everyone gets along and helps each other.”</i></p> <p><i>“Getting along with other students.”</i></p>

Barriers to support for learning

“It might make it hard because they might have something on every day or they might feel like they are not important so they don’t tell anyone so no one knows that they need help in certain subjects.” (Year 3 to Year 6)

A range of barriers to support for learning were described by students across Year 3 to Year 12. The difficulty of asking for help or voicing concerns was a strong theme from students, with this as the most common response to the question, ‘What makes it hard for kids to get the help or support they need?’ Students also referred to their relationships with others, teacher practices and their own perceptions and feelings.

“They might not have the support they need to learn.” (Year 7 to Year 12)

For many, the stigma attached to asking for help with learning led to students hiding their concerns or expressing uncertainty about asking for help. For others, the availability of the teacher limited their capacity to seek assistance. Teacher availability was often influenced by the behaviour or needs of peers. An environment in which help-seeking behaviour was encouraged and welcomed was desired by students. Similar to previous consultations by the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, students wanted people to be available, to listen to them, understand them and to proactively provide assistance.

Availability of school staff

The availability of teachers was a particularly pertinent issue for students in terms of receiving support for learning. The size of classes limited opportunities for students to receive assistance. Some students perceived specific students who regularly received assistance, or those who did not need assistance, as taking up teacher time. In response to these concerns, students suggested smaller classes, streaming, or additional teachers or teaching assistants within classrooms.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Too many kids in one room. She can't hear you."</i></p> <p><i>"It's hard because some kids get more treatment than others!!!"</i></p> <p><i>"When there is only one teacher in the class."</i></p> <p><i>"Not enough assistants and one-on-one work."</i></p> <p><i>"They are helping the smarter students not the lower grade students."</i></p> <p><i>"When they are in big classes with only one teacher it is hard for the teachers to actually go through it with you."</i></p> <p><i>"The teachers might be talking to another teacher or student."</i></p>	<p><i>"There is only 1 teacher and about 30 kids so it's hard for the teacher to help everyone."</i></p> <p><i>"Kids that don't need extra help get distracted by the teachers. I get that they need extra help but it gets annoying, they should go to another room."</i></p> <p><i>"When the teachers focus on the kids that do well rather than the kids that need help."</i></p> <p><i>"Too many kids in class."</i></p> <p><i>"Having different levels of intelligence in one class."</i></p> <p><i>"If the teacher never gets to you, because they are too busy with other students."</i></p> <p><i>"Help people who have disability and make it hard for teachers to teach."</i></p>

The behaviour of other students also affected student's access to support, in particular learning time and teacher time. Students described how the disruptive behaviour of other students, such as talking, not listening, calling out or instigating fights, made it difficult to concentrate in class and responding to these students took up the teacher's time.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"The kids might not understand what the person is saying and they will get the question wrong because they might not be listening."</i></p> <p><i>"When other people are talking about irrelevant subjects."</i></p> <p><i>"They won't get help because they will not behave."</i></p> <p><i>"People trying to get into a fight with a more naughty kid."</i></p> <p><i>"Kids are selfish because they haven't got any friends."</i></p> <p><i>"Distraction noises, vehicles passing, smaller (and noisier) kids."</i></p> <p><i>"People that don't care for your learning slowing you down."</i></p> <p><i>"When kids talk, they're not hearing the teachers so they get left behind."</i></p>	<p><i>"The teachers focus on people messing about the whole lesson and the people who want to learn miss out!"</i></p> <p><i>"If teachers are only focusing on the kids that muck around and annoy other students, instead of focusing on the kids who WANT to learn and get good grades."</i></p> <p><i>"The kids don't turn up to class and they do whatever they want."</i></p> <p><i>"Some kids talking too much and it's hard."</i></p> <p><i>"Disturbing each other to not study and not learn."</i></p> <p><i>"Some teachers don't actually concentrate on what the students around them do, so some students can't learn as much."</i></p>

Feeling scared, embarrassed or shy

“Conceal don’t feel don’t let them know you’re stupid.” (Year 7 to Year 12)

The perceptions of others strongly influenced student help-seeking behaviour. Students referred to feeling too embarrassed, scared and shy to ask for help and were concerned what others would think of them. Fear of being teased by other students or judged by teachers or peers immobilised students. There was a stigma attached to asking for help whereby students perceived they would be labelled as ‘different’ or not smart. Incorrect answers and not knowing what to do were also a cause of stress and anxiety.

Feeling scared or embarrassed affected student self-confidence and their help-seeking behaviour and, in some cases, students indicated that they would rather not ask for help than risk embarrassment within the classroom. Students valued teachers who created a safe learning environment in which students felt that it was OK to ask questions and to make mistakes. Such environments support engagement with learning.¹⁰⁰

The potential positive influence of friends was noted, with students wanting friends to be supportive of them, particularly if they needed assistance with learning. A learning environment that promotes help-seeking behaviour is critical for student’s level of comfort and confidence in learning.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“They might get the question wrong.”</i></p> <p><i>“Someone might be too shy to ask for help so they copy others’ work and they never learn anything or get the help they need because the teacher just thinks they are fine.”</i></p> <p><i>“Embarrassed in front of smart people.”</i></p> <p><i>“It might be an easy question.”</i></p> <p><i>“They could get embarrassed for not knowing the question.”</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes people don’t notice so the kids can be stuck on something and they might be nervous to tell someone.”</i></p> <p><i>“They feel stupid that they don’t know it.”</i></p> <p><i>“When you don’t know how to do the work and you don’t want to put your hand up and be the odd one out.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s hard when people don’t really care if someone is trying hard but needs lots of support and help.”</i></p> <p><i>“Thinking they’ll get bullied if they ask for help they say nothing and carry on with no help with a bad or terrible grade.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Be able to ask a question without the fear of being made fun of.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s better and easier to talk to other students than a teacher. Sometimes students are scared to talk to teachers because you don’t want them to judge.”</i></p> <p><i>“Being too shy to ask the teacher questions.”</i></p> <p><i>“Other smart people pressuring them like they need it or are different.”</i></p> <p><i>“Kids do not sometimes find it hard unless they are nervous or scared asking for help from teachers. Other kids are OK about talking to someone who can help them and easily get support or help.”</i></p> <p><i>“Shame – embarrassed to ask for help on an ‘easy’ question.”</i></p> <p><i>“They don’t want to get judged for asking.”</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes it can be awkward asking the teacher for help.”</i></p> <p><i>“They get teased by peers when they ask for help from a teacher.”</i></p> <p><i>“The surrounding classmates being judgemental.”</i></p>

Teacher practices

"I think teachers that can relate to children are much more helpful and supportive in kids' lives." (Year 7 to Year 12)

"They might get scared of the teacher they have." (Year 3 to Year 6)

The actions and behaviours of teachers either created or stifled an environment in which students felt able to request assistance and had confidence in a positive response. Students referred to the interpersonal qualities of teachers and their classroom practices as influential.

Students wanted teachers who understood them and their lives and demonstrated care for students. Teachers who were mean, rude, stubborn, aggressive or verbally abusive, or used alienating practices such as intimidation, shaming, labelling or shouting were perceived by students as unhelpful and unapproachable.

Some students in Year 7 to Year 12 felt that sometimes teachers provoked students or that the teacher's mood affected how they treated students. They felt there should be clear and strict policies about teacher behaviour towards students, which should include no verbal abuse or aggressive behaviour. Students stated they wanted their classroom to mirror an adult learning environment, where students and teachers were treated with mutual respect and where teachers were relaxed and flexible.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"When the teachers don't care about you and they are mean because you feel sad."</i></p> <p><i>"When teachers shout all the time."</i></p> <p><i>"[...] teachers that don't care about the kids because the teachers help [us] to do well and [they] need to care."</i></p>	<p><i>"Kids need a teacher that will realise what children's lives are like outside of the classroom."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers who understand."</i></p> <p><i>"If they have a bad reputation and teachers always assume that it is the same person."</i></p> <p><i>"Misunderstanding teachers being prejudiced."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers that don't put you down or ruin your day."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers who don't make you lose your confidence."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers who aren't understanding or able to acknowledge students' troubles."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers being more laid back."</i></p>

A range of classroom practices were suggested as making it difficult to learn or get support for learning. Some comments referred to the pedagogical approach adopted by teachers, whereas others referred to behaviour management or the expertise of teachers. Adjusting to different ways of learning between remote and metropolitan areas was noted as a difficulty by some students in Year 7 to Year 12. Adapting and modernising teaching methods to suit student needs was highlighted by students as beneficial for engagement.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Teacher favouritism."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers passing through subjects too fast."</i></p> <p><i>"When the teachers don't give help and they don't let the students use calculators or any sort of devices and let the children stress out and tell them off when it's the teacher's fault."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers don't go back to the same subject so you forget."</i></p> <p><i>"Not experienced teachers."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers can't control the naughty kids."</i></p>	<p><i>"Teachers don't check and make sure you're learning and understanding."</i></p> <p><i>"When teachers single you out if you're not good at it."</i></p> <p><i>"When a teacher is using a teaching method that is hard to understand."</i></p> <p><i>"Page full of words (no pictures, diagrams or anything)."</i></p> <p><i>"Some teachers only make children do classwork but some students benefit more from interactive learning."</i></p> <p><i>"Teacher doesn't know what they are teaching."</i></p>

Consequences arising from speaking up or seeking assistance were also a concern for students. Getting into trouble, being disciplined, not knowing how teachers would respond, or being judged by teachers complicated student's actions. Occasionally, students felt confused by mixed messages received from teachers, which hampered their willingness to ask for help.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Punished for nothing."</i></p> <p><i>"Getting put on the number 1,2,3 chart which puts you down."</i></p> <p><i>"Having someone help you but expect you to do all the work."</i></p> <p><i>"Being worried you will get told off for not completing work."</i></p>	<p><i>"Afraid to get detention if they talk."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers need to actually listen and help us understand instead of making us feel stupid when we have actual questions."</i></p> <p><i>"Afraid it will affect their grade."</i></p> <p><i>"Move you for no reason."</i></p> <p><i>"Worried teachers will get mad."</i></p> <p><i>"Teachers make you feel bad."</i></p>

When teachers did not act in supportive ways, students felt uncomfortable and unable to seek assistance with learning. Quality relationships with teachers facilitated student help-seeking behaviour – highlighting the importance of relationships for school and learning.

Students wanted teachers who use effective pedagogy, proactively provide support and use effective behaviour management strategies. When teachers worked in these ways, it was easier for students to learn and get help with learning.

Year 7 to Year 12

- "We shouldn't be scared of teachers."*
- "Some kids don't want to ask questions or talk to teachers they don't like."*
- "Some teachers seem unapproachable."*
- "Teachers not listening (enforcing a dictatorship in class)."*
- "If they don't have a relationship with the teacher where they feel like they can't talk to the teacher."*
- "They never talk to you unless you're causing trouble."*
- "Scared to approach the teachers."*

Students also indicated that they needed avenues of support in response to teacher behaviour or feedback.

"We need support for when teachers are hurtful or give bad feedback that is mean. We need people to talk to these teachers and help us deal with them." (Year 7 to Year 12)

Accessibility of support resources

Students were cognisant that a range of factors influenced the availability of resources and services within schools, towns and families. Cost of staff (tutors, assistants, etc) or equipment, time available and location were noted as prohibitive factors. At a systems level, it is essential that schools are adequately resourced to enable engagement through meeting the needs of their student cohort and community.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Cost."</i></p> <p><i>"It makes it hard because sometimes you have to pay a lot of money to get help."</i></p> <p><i>"They don't have the money."</i></p> <p><i>"Because they might need a tutor and it might cost a lot."</i></p> <p><i>"Because we live in [a regional town] it's hard to get the support she needs."</i></p> <p><i>"Fundraising for equipment. If the school does not have the money to buy it."</i></p> <p><i>"No teacher assistants."</i></p> <p><i>"No books!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"</i></p>	<p><i>"Financial situations – not enough money for tutor."</i></p> <p><i>"Limited time for tutoring."</i></p> <p><i>"Cost of tutors or extra teaching."</i></p> <p><i>"Kids in the metropolitan area have up-to-date technology, but kids in regional areas have limited help."</i></p> <p><i>"No money to pay the tutors."</i></p> <p><i>"Internet (if it is so slow)."</i></p>

Students also identified that the knowledge, skills and experiences of family members influenced the levels of support available to students. A family member's own level of education or experiences of schooling can impact their capacity to provide assistance, as discussed further in Chapter 3.3 – Families that are involved and interested.

Students in Year 7 to Year 12 noted that diversity of backgrounds and experiences were not necessarily catered for within schools. They explained that cultural or religious backgrounds, gender, having English as a second language, having a disability or having been to different schools can make it hard for some students to learn. This included the differences between schools, and the differences in experiences between metropolitan and remote schools.

Pressure

"People think you are smart and know everything." (Year 7 to Year 12)

Pressure sometimes immobilised students from getting the help or support they needed. Students experienced pressure from the expectations of others, the fear of failure and when under a time limit or deadline. Feeling stress or pressure compromised their ability to concentrate on learning and impacted their self-confidence.

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>"Pressure (not enough time)."</i></p> <p><i>"They need to learn faster."</i></p> <p><i>"Too much homework and worried to not get it done."</i></p> <p><i>"Preparing for something e.g. a test."</i></p> <p><i>"High expectations."</i></p> <p><i>"The pressure and shyness."</i></p>	<p><i>"They're scared they'll fail."</i></p> <p><i>"Standards – stress."</i></p> <p><i>"Hard to admit they need it."</i></p> <p><i>"High expectations of parents."</i></p> <p><i>"Pressure to succeed."</i></p>

Suggestions from students

Assistance with learning and learning in a safe, calm and supportive environment were important for students to be ready and able to engage in learning. Positive and supportive relationships were critical for students feeling comfortable to seek assistance with learning.

To enhance engagement and overcome difficulties with learning students required increased access to support for learning. Students suggested a variety of strategies, including

- increasing the number of school staff (more teachers or aides/assistants) to improve ratios of school staff to students or to decrease the size of classes
- more time to be spent on active teaching and learning (rather than copying from a board or book)
- clear explanations
- consideration of class compositions (student need, ability/streaming, removal of disruptive students) to account for different learning needs, minimise disruptions and encourage a supportive classroom environment.

Students in Year 7 to Year 12 also suggested greater communication about work requirements, learning progress and pathways beyond school (more frequent, responsive and targeted).

Year 3 to Year 6	Year 7 to Year 12
<p><i>“Teachers helping children a bit more. Because they usually explain it and the student still doesn’t get it. Maybe extra help with a built in school tutor at recess and (or) lunch.”</i></p> <p><i>“Have a specialist class for kids that are behind (– oh yeah).”</i></p> <p><i>“Better learning system e.g. more explaining, more ways of studying.”</i></p> <p><i>“More time to submit projects.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would like more teachers/EA’s because we have over 1000 students.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Smaller classes – classes of 15-20 so the teacher has more time to work with you.”</i></p> <p><i>“Teachers understanding how us students learn.”</i></p> <p><i>“Free study period catch-up on work.”</i></p> <p><i>“Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>between teachers and students</i> • <i>weekly emails addressing work due within the week</i> • <i>set times and days for online lessons that suit everyone’s timetables and schedules.”</i> <p><i>“More visual activities and less written work as this is bad to just learn in 1 way.”</i></p> <p><i>“More help for disadvantaged students.”</i></p>