
2. Engagement Indicators

The complexity of student engagement has been firmly established in the research literature on the issue.⁴⁶ Various terminology has been used to describe the different influences on engagement, including indicators, factors and elements. Often these terms are used interchangeably. In setting out to hear from students about what helps them be engaged with school and learning and what makes it difficult, a wide range of elements identified as impacting on engagement were canvassed to understand what factors are important and meaningful to students.

Analysis of the data gained from students showed evidence of a complex interplay between the different elements. Four elements emerged as clear indicators of engagement and were used to measure a student's level of engagement. Other elements were identified as factors that influenced engagement but did not show an indication of how well a student was engaged at school.

The following four indicators emerged from the consultation as meaningful and relevant to students in the context of engagement:

1. Attendance
2. Academic achievement
3. Liking school
4. Sense of belonging.

Each of the indicators was measured by specific survey questions (for example "How important is it to you to be at school every day?" or "Do you feel like you are part of your school?"). For students in Year 3 to Year 6, Indicators 3 and 4 were combined as one survey question to make them easy to understand.⁴⁷

These indicators provide a sufficiently broad 'definition' of engagement, identifying, for example, that even if a student attends school and achieves well, they may not be fully engaged or achieving maximum value from their education if they do not enjoy school or feel as though they belong.

By analysing participants' comments in relation to these four indicators, the consultation was able to identify what factors had the most influence on their engagement. The factors are discussed in Chapter 3 – Primary factors – The foundations for engagement with school and learning and Chapter 4 – Secondary factors – The accelerators for engagement with school and learning.

The following sections of this chapter describe the level of engagement students who participated in the consultation have with their school and learning according to the identified indicators.

The Student Engagement Framework

The nine factors and their inter-relatedness can be described with the following model:

