

Remaining Clever With Attendance

Student Attendance in the Yarra Schools Network since the completion of the School Participation Project

The School Participation Project was implemented in the nine schools of the Yarra Schools Network in July 2003 and culminated with the release of the *Getting Clever with Attendance* Report in August 2006. This report documented all the work of the project within the innovative frameworks of an *Attendance – Clever School* and an *Attendance - Clever Network*. The main strategic work was completed in December 2005 and from January to June 2006 the evaluation was carried out and the report was produced.

A key priority of the evaluation phase was the establishment of strategies and priorities for addressing issues of sustainability of the work established in the project. This involved:

- Development of clear understandings and statements of the roles and future operation existing Network working groups.
- Dissemination of all project resources and tools to all Network schools
- Ongoing Professional Learning sessions for all Network groups and staff in all schools
- Discussion of the key findings of the project work and the implications for the Network and for individual schools.
- Consolidation of the links between the Network and other Attendance improvement projects including Northern Metropolitan Region initiatives and the *It's Not OK to be Away* program.

The project is widely recognised as a good practice model and has informed the Office of School Education and the *It's Not OK to Be Away* program as well as DoE regional strategy through the *Statewide Attendance Advisory Group* and the *Statewide Attendance Regional Support Group*. Many of the materials produced in the project are used in schools throughout Victoria. It has had particular impact in the NMR where the learning has formed the basis of the *Improving Student Attendance* Professional Learning Program. The work has also informed strategic direction in the Eastern, Western, Barwon South-West and Gippsland Regions as well as the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. The project has supported many individual schools, other attendance projects, and community agency forums and programs. The project report is featured on the NMR website. The project was also featured in the media including, *Education Age* (22/5/06) *Education Times* (20/10/05) and *Stateline* (ABC TV)(28/7/06)

What does the Network absence data show?

The *Yarra Schools Network Student Absence 2002-2006* graphs present student absence data, which is annually provided to networks by DoE. It was the routine annual analysis of this data that provided the impetus for the action of the Yarra Network. The data for 2002 and 2003 is the pre data for the project and shows a definite and steady increase in student absence rates in both primary and secondary schools. The peak in absence rates in 2003 clearly demonstrates the trend that the Network was responding to in establishing this project

It can be seen that overall student absence levels have steadily declined since the implementation of the School Participation Project strategies in January 2004. The data indicates that by the end of 2006, all levels from Prep to Year 12 were below the 2005 State means.

The data also shows that all year levels have experienced a decrease of at least two days per student with improvement of up to 8 days per student at some year levels. This is particularly pleasing given that this data includes absence figures for three alternative settings within the Network.

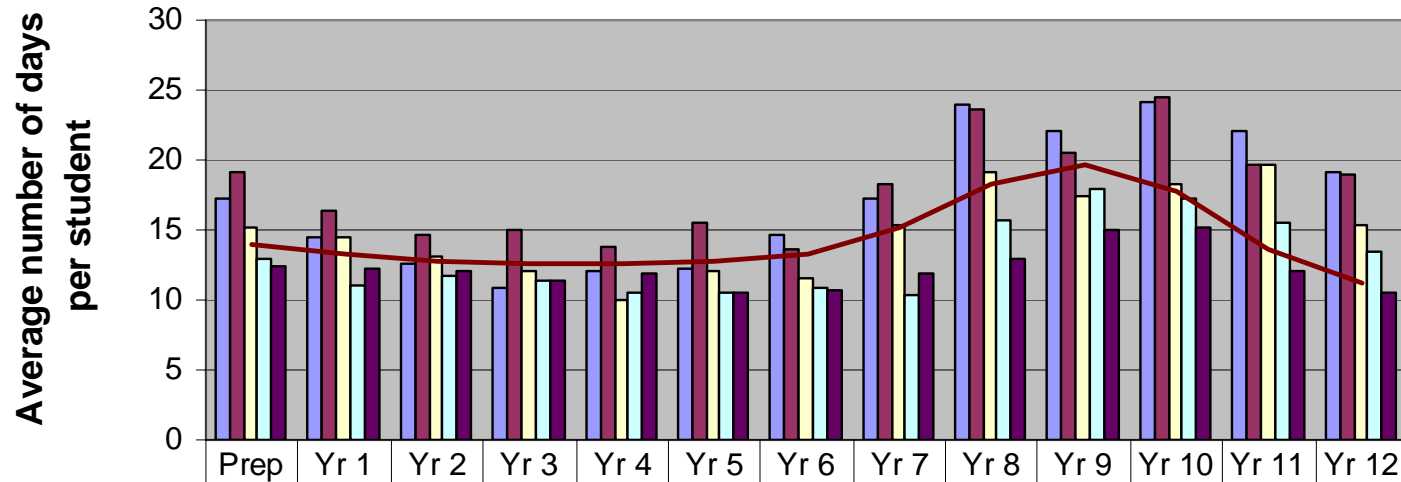
It should be noted that all schools have experienced for 2006 an increase in the number of absences due to Extended Family Holidays. This has impacted heavily on absence levels in the Primary settings especially, with these schools experiencing an average of around four days per student due to this reason.

Overall success of the project strategies is indicated by the Network Prep to 12 average of 12.3 days per student an improvement of 6.4 days per student. The 2006 average is below the 2005 State mean of 14.3 days per student.

The absence rates at years 11 and 12 were an ongoing challenge to the Network secondary schools. It was felt that earlier figures were not a true reflection of student attendance at these levels. The schools reported that they had experienced difficulties in gaining accurate data due to flexible student movement and hours. These schools consequently implemented period-by-period electronic roll marking procedures to address this situation. The results of this initiative are reflected in the decrease in absence at these levels in 2006.

In conclusion it should be noted that individual school annual absence data (not included in this report) indicates that all schools have achieved a decrease in student absence rates. Some individual primary schools have achieved as much as a fifty percent decrease. In addition, all of the schools have absence rates at individual year levels that are now amongst the lowest in the state.

Yarra Schools Network Student Absence 2002-2006



	Prep	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12
2002	17.2	14.4	12.6	10.9	12.1	12.3	14.6	17.3	24	22.1	24.2	22	19.1
2003	19.2	16.3	14.6	15	13.8	15.6	13.6	18.3	23.6	20.6	24.5	19.7	18.9
2004	15.2	14.5	13.1	12.1	10	12	11.6	15.3	19.1	17.4	18.2	19.6	15.4
2005	12.9	11	11.8	11.3	10.5	10.5	10.8	10.3	15.7	17.9	17.3	15.5	13.5
2006	12.5	12.2	12.1	11.3	11.9	10.5	10.7	11.9	12.9	15	15.1	12.1	10.5
State Mean 2005	13.9	13.3	12.8	12.6	12.6	12.7	13.3	15.1	18.3	19.7	17.7	13.6	11.2

Yarra Schools Network Average Student Absence 2002 - 2006

