

Remote School Attendance Strategy

ACT to improve student attendance



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Remote School Attendance Strategy: ACT to improve student attendance

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Contact details: National Curriculum Services, PO Box 361, Abbotsford VIC 3067, Phone +61 3 9415 1299

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Introduction

During 2014 National Curriculum Services (NCS) worked in 10 very remote schools and communities to develop a tailored Attendance Improvement Strategy for each school.

Each of these 10 locations is a participant in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS). As part of this Australian Government initiative, RSAS providers are funded to employ local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to work as School Attendance Supervisors (SASs) and School Attendance Officers (SAOs). The RSAS team members work with parents and families to support children to go to school every day.

Consultants used the NCS 'ACT to improve' framework and tools to facilitate locally developed solutions to attendance challenges.

The ACT (Attending, Connecting, Teaching) tools served diagnostic and planning purposes for:

- assessing effectiveness of existing strategies, and
- developing a plan for sustained improvement in student attendance and learning.

Common challenges

The challenges for improving student attendance were similar across the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools and communities. These included school, community and contextual factors such as:

- community events and activities such as festivals, carnivals and show days impacting school attendance
- funeral business and cultural obligations impacting student attendance and RSAS team members fulfilling their employment obligations
- mobility of families
- high levels of turnover among RSAS staff
- suitability of some school staff to work in a remote, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context
- cultural practices such as family and clan relationships that can limit the capacity of RSAS staff to address issues with some members of the community
- limited opportunities for employment in the community
- perceptions and practices around school and the purpose of education
- socio-economic, health, housing and educational achievement factors that can impact people accessing services and opportunities.

Common themes

Some common themes and strategies emerged from the work. Schools that are having success in improving attendance rates recognise the importance of:

- strategies targeted to address local challenges
- developing authentic partnerships between schools, RSAS providers and RSAS staff, families, communities and other parties/agencies to address attendance challenges
- clearly mapped processes and systems that are understood and implemented by all
- the use of data to analyse attendance and absence patterns and to inform decision-making
- developing simple and clear communications to families about the importance of attendance
- establishing clear role descriptions for teachers, RSAS Supervisors and Officers in monitoring attendance, and leaders
- building the capacity of RSAS Supervisors and Officers
- effective leadership from the school, RSAS Supervisors and community leaders.

This publication

The ACT framework provides a broad strategic approach that enables locally constructed actions tailored to each school's context. Schools and RSAS providers can use the framework and tools described in this publication to identify the factors that they could try to influence to improve attendance and develop targeted action plans in response.

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SCHOOL CONTEXT

School 1, offering education from Preschool to Year 12, is located in a community 550km from the closest large city. The settlement was originally established as a mission in the first half of the twentieth century and remained under Church direction until it became self-managed. The school serves a number of Homeland Learning Centres. Accessibility is varied (often seasonal), and education delivery is to small groups of students unable to attend the central school.

Student enrolment of approximately 750 is 98% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, with an average student attendance of 55–60%. It is estimated that there could be in excess of 1000 school aged children in the overall catchment area. If all students were to attend school on a regular basis, the school would not have sufficient physical resources to cater for this number of students.

The RSAS is delivered by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned and locally-based Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) provider, delivering employment services to the community and homelands.

ACTIVITIES

Key activities identified from the initial ACT framework diagnostic scoping exercise and subsequent consultation and negotiation with RSAS/school personnel included:

- Working with RSAS team members and school personnel to develop a communication strategy that outlines to the community the key messages, expectations, commitments and support related to the RSAS strategy and school attendance.
- Developing a consultation process that provides feedback from RSAS team members and school staff about the in school support roles provided by SAOs.
- Supporting the school in the development of an Attendance Improvement Strategy that outlines targets the school will work toward achieving and key strategies that will be implemented to improve attendance.

WHAT WORKED?

- Collaboration with the RSAS team members and the School Cultural Liaison and Community Liaison Officers resulted in information being produced in local language and according to appropriate protocols that related to the RSAS and student attendance.
- Support provided to the RSAS team produced tools to assist SAOs in the performance of their duties and to implement procedures that support monitoring and management of staff performance and supervision. This work resulted in a number of documents that outlined processes to support the RSAS team working effectively with the school and the community.
- A strategic planning process using the ACT framework, provided an integrated model for school staff and RSAS personnel to identify how the school could strategically address school attendance. Examples included:
 - Staff meetings and bulletins to provide data on weekly attendance and progressive school performance.
 - Data analysed to target individual or cohorts of students e.g. students in particular bands i.e. 80%+, 60–80%, <60%, to receive focused intervention and follow-up.
 - Campus planning and implementation processes include using baseline monitoring practices for key attendance strategies that will enable judgements to be made on the effectiveness of the practices being implemented.
 - Data wall to be displayed in prominent position to include attendance information.
 - Meetings with RSAS and school personnel to include sharing most recent data and progressive school performance.
 - Developing a case management, feedback and reporting model that enables sharing of information and allocation of tasks related to students/families requiring support to improve school attendance.
 - Daily meeting with key school and RSAS personnel to determine students to be followed up as identified through analysis of attendance data and/or staff member referral.
 - Delegation of in school/community roles that SAOs perform to support school attendance, including breakfast programme, learning on country, sport and fitness, working in classrooms, shops, community oval and basketball courts.

The ACT framework

The 'ACT to improve' framework was developed by NCS to assist schools in identifying strategies to improve student attendance and outcomes that were appropriate to the school's context. The framework and project methodology were based on previous work completed by NCS in remote and very remote schools that had demonstrated sustained improvement in attendance rates and literacy and/or numeracy outcomes¹.

The ACT (Attending, Connecting, Teaching) framework

The ACT framework consists of three key elements:



1. Attending – **A**
2. Connecting – **C**
3. Teaching (& Learning) – **T**

These ACT elements represent groups of factors a school can influence or act on to improve student attendance and outcomes. The elements and the relationships among them are depicted in Figure 1. A fourth element, Leadership (the outer circle of the graphic), identifies leadership as a critical factor in influencing all that a school can act on to improve student attendance, connectedness and learning.

Figure 1 shows that improving attendance, while critically important, is not the only factor that contributes to improved student outcomes. Increased attendance provides greater opportunities for learning, but once students are at school their levels of connectedness and engagement and the quality of teaching will add significantly to their learning. Without engagement and quality teaching, the potential for increased attendance and benefits for students may not be realised.

The relationships mean the ACT framework provides a coherent approach to improving outcomes that incorporate a range of factors a school can influence to improve outcomes.

Attending

Attending involves specific interventions designed to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student attendance. This element incorporates evidence-based strategies designed to reduce unauthorised absences based on an understanding of current absence patterns and the factors contributing to them. Strategies might range from ensuring general school administration systems and attendance management processes are working to specific individual student case management approaches.

Connecting

Promoting attachment and connectedness enhances student emotional engagement with their education. Such engagement is important to ensure that increased attendance results in improved outcomes. Connecting includes developing partnerships and positive school cultures – establishing meaningful connections with students and their families and community characterised by positive relationships, cultural responsiveness and mutually held high expectations about attendance and learning.

Teaching (& Learning)

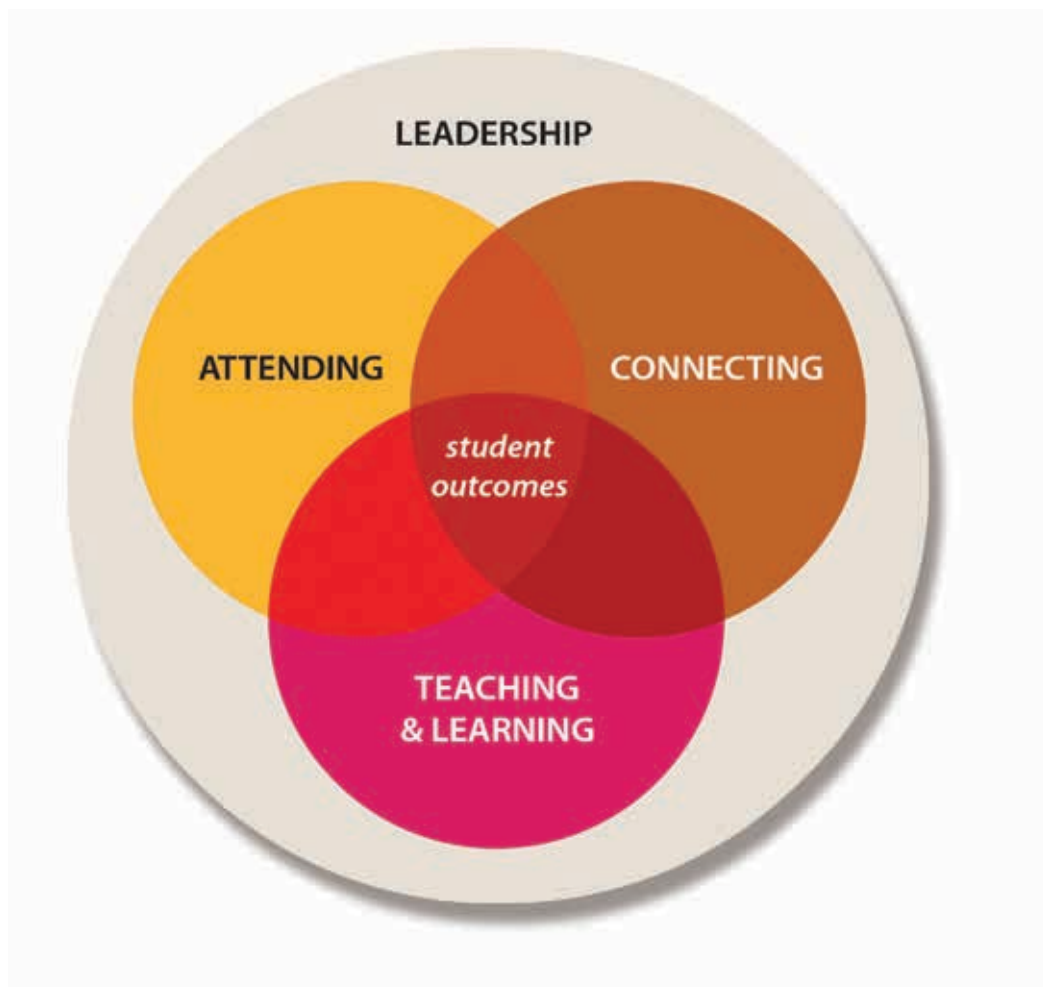
If students are attending and engaged then a further piece in the improved outcomes' equation is the quality of teaching. Measures of good practice in this element include the extent to which:

- whole school approaches to evidence-based teaching are occurring
- learning content is engaging, accessible and culturally responsive
- the school builds and sustains teacher capacity to deliver quality teaching.

Leadership is critical

Clear leadership is critical to ensure all three ACT elements are in place and working effectively. Understanding the attributes and the school's context in each of the elements enables school, community and RSAS teams to identify what they need to do to increase attendance and outcomes. As such, the ACT framework provides a guide for all leaders, not just those in the school, to act to improve.

FIGURE 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP, STUDENT OUTCOMES AND ACT ELEMENTS



The ACT diagnostic tool

NCS consultants used a diagnostic instrument and a strategic planning template while working with schools. Both were based on the ACT framework.

Diagnostic instrument

Each of the elements was developed into a continuum of practice that might be observed in a school at various stages in its endeavours to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student attendance and outcomes. Each element's continuum is divided into four levels describing these stages (see Figure 2):

- Beginning
- Emerging
- Consolidating
- Embedded & Sustained.

The diagnostic instrument was used to gauge where each school was on each of the four elements in terms of effective practice. The diagnoses revealed that the average stage of development for all 10 schools combined was:

ACT framework element	Average level of development
Attending	Emerging
Connecting	Emerging
Teaching	Consolidating
Leadership	Emerging/Consolidating

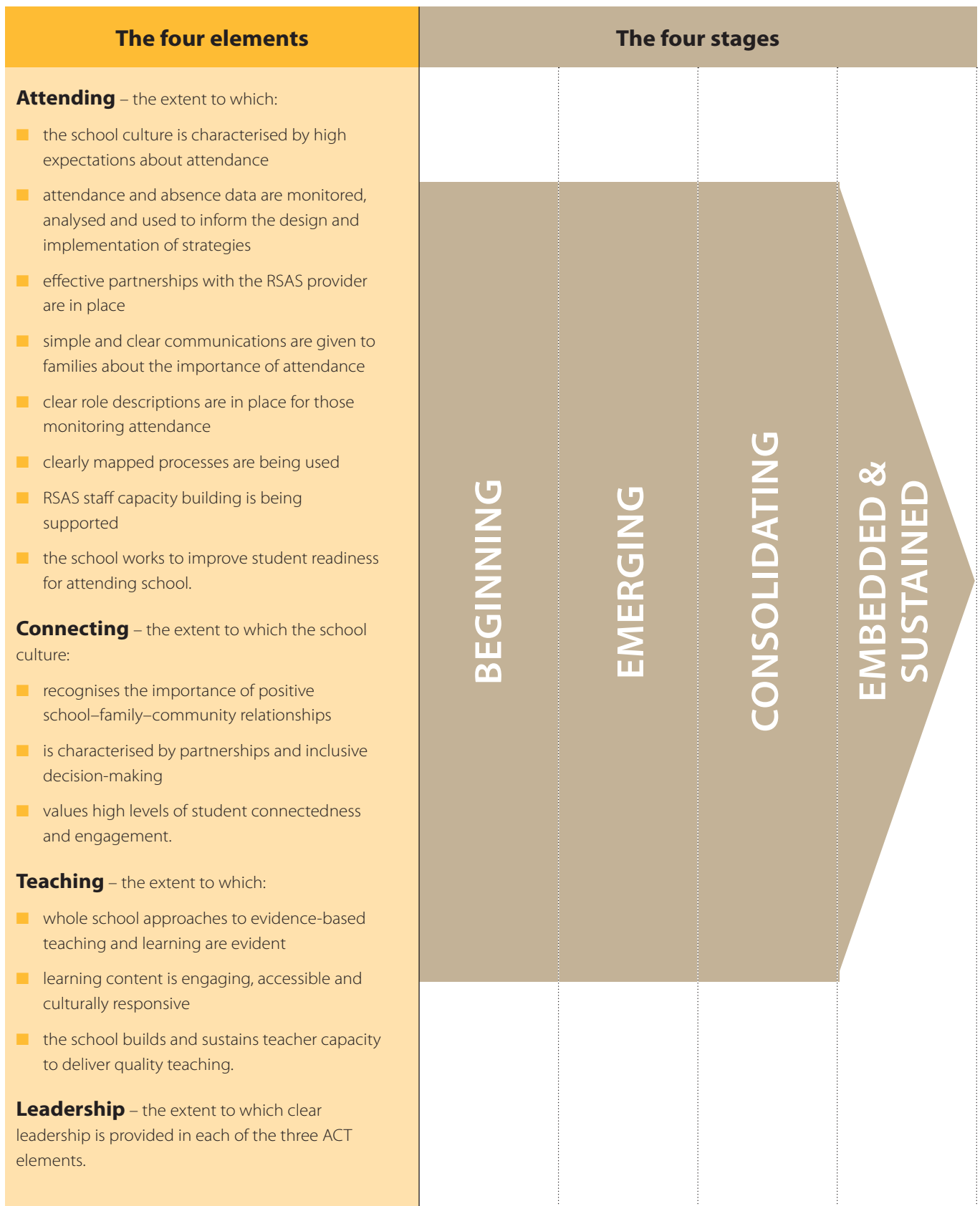
The assessment identified that the highest need for support and development was in the ACT framework's Attending and Connecting elements. This diagnosis also assisted in identifying improvement strategies appropriate to each school's context, and the areas where NCS consultants could best provide support.

Strategic planning template

The construction of the diagnostic tool into four levels also served as a basis for developing an improvement 'map', clearly charting a course to embedding and sustaining effective practice. Consultants used a strategic planning template based on the ACT framework to develop an Attendance Improvement Strategy for each school. The template included sections for identifying strategies and associated actions for Attending, Connecting, Teaching and Leadership. An example is reproduced in Appendix 1 on page 31.

For example, if a school identified that the monitoring, analysis and use of attendance and absence data was at the emerging stage, it could develop actions designed to improve data collection and analysis procedures with the intention of ultimately embedding them in school and RSAS practices.

FIGURE 2: THE DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENT USED



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SCHOOL CONTEXT

School 2, offering education from Preschool to Year 10, with approximately 240 students on the active roll, is located 300km from its closest regional city. The local population is approximately 1200, with 10 major family groupings (skin groups) in the community; 95% of students' first language is that of the local community. The RSAS provider for this school included a coordinator's role.

The consultant rated the school at the following levels on the NCS ACT framework:

Area	Judgement
Attending	Emerging
Connecting	Emerging
Teaching (& Learning)	Consolidating
Leadership	Emerging

During the consultant's initial visit, the RSAS Coordinator and the Principal both expressed a need for assistance in developing appropriate strategic plans. The Principal requested specific support in developing a site improvement plan, a community engagement policy and some form of attendance plan. The school does not currently have a documented strategy based around attendance.

WHAT WORKED?

- Although many of the new students were not regular attendees, a strategic approach to targeting these students was made as a result of processes suggested by the consultant. The school reported that students who initially attended one or two days per week had increased their attendance. The most significant increase in attendance and enrolment was in the middle years and secondary section of the school, traditionally the most difficult areas of the school to improve attendance. Middle years' boys averaged 68% attendance in 2014 and there were seven students in Years 9 and above who attended 75%. On one of the consultant's visits in the secondary section there were 26 boys and 20 girls at school. The success of this attendance of young men and young women is a credit to the RSAS Coordinator.
- The school is collecting and analysing data by year level and across the school to inform further actions to improve attendance.
- During a special meeting with staff to discuss attendance and ways of encouraging all students to attend school, the staff were adamant that a transition into a school readiness class was necessary if teachers were to maintain their own mental health and commitment to the school. They believe that this type of class would address the needs of the students who had rarely attended school in the past and as a result not disrupt the learning of others nor place an undue burden on teachers to continually manage challenging behaviour rather than teach.
- The consultant, after discussion with both the Principal and the RSAS Coordinator, agreed to focus his work on implementing processes which would increase the likelihood of sustainability for the new programme's initial success during 2015 and beyond, whilst making timely suggestions for improving current practices. This included establishing clear roles and responsibilities' statements so that these were in place when staff changes occurred.

Key themes

The ACT framework provided a broad strategic approach that facilitated locally constructed actions tailored to each school's context. It enabled schools and RSAS providers to identify the factors that they could try to influence to improve attendance and develop targeted action plans in response.

The NCS ACT tool has proven to be an extremely effective lens through which to view attendance:

- RSAS covers the aspects of the Attending component of attendance and can be particularly effective when there is strong interaction and consultation with the school.
- RSAS is extremely useful in Connecting with the community and between the school and the community.
- The school is responsible for developing their own Attending and Connecting components of attending.
- The school is totally responsible for the Teaching and Learning component.
- The school is integral in the Leadership component and leadership from the RSAS is also important. If these two roles are coordinated the potential for improved attendance is increased.

Some common key themes emerged from the project. They included the importance of:

ACT element	Key theme
Attending	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ strategies targeted to address local challenges■ clearly mapped processes and systems that were understood and implemented by all■ the use of data to analyse attendance and absence patterns and to inform decision-making■ developing simple and clear communications to families about the importance of attendance■ establishing clear role descriptions for teachers, RSAS Supervisors and Officers in monitoring attendance, and school and community leaders■ building the capacity of RSAS Supervisors and Officers.
Attending & Connecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ developing authentic partnerships between schools, RSAS providers, RSAS staff, families, communities and other parties/agencies to address attendance challenges.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ effective leadership from the school, RSAS Supervisors and community leaders.

The following sections provide illustrations of each of these themes, including descriptions, examples of how the schools identified targeted strategies, the strategies and actions relevant to the theme, and some examples of school work.

Theme 1

Strategies targeted to address local challenges

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SCHOOL CONTEXT

School 3 provides P–10 education to the 1200 predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The consultant worked with the school using the ACT framework to identify the key actions and activities to be planned, developed and implemented during semester 2, 2014 and into 2015.

The priority areas of work identified included:

- Working in partnership with the Principal on explicit strategies using the 'ACT to improve' tool to support the goal of improving student engagement.
- Undertaking mentoring and support for the leadership team, with a focus on attendance and school systems and processes, especially with the Deputy Principal. These systems included students attending boarding school.
- Interviewing community members regarding school attendance and 'what the community think will help attendance'.
- Supporting and facilitating the development of an explicit School–Community Partnership Agreement.
- Working with the RSAS SASs and SAOs to enable them to undertake their work in a productive manner.
- Facilitating the production of multimedia resources for school and RSAS staff regarding attendance.

WHAT WORKED?

- Development of a school attendance policy document that included school based activities and responsible officers.
- Production of a vodcast with key messages about attendance from the Principal, teachers and the community for induction programmes.
- RSAS team and school working on attendance strategies in a more collaborative manner.
- Development of a School–Community Partnership Agreement, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.
- An Attendance Improvement Strategy was developed with the school leadership team. Sample actions contained in this plan include:
 - Improved data collection and use processes, such as collecting and collating school attendance data, and reporting on a regular basis, data analysis to prioritise strategic focus on students who miss regular days and a focus on the early years to develop good attendance patterns.
 - Each class setting an attendance goal.
 - Each student has a personal attendance goal to improve their attendance by 6%.
 - SAOs are doing daily community run.
 - Daily breakfast club organised and conducted by the school with RSAS staff assistance.
 - Deadly awards for high attendance, good behaviour and social skills.
 - Development of a whole school policy on attendance.
 - Design of staff and SAOs' uniforms.

Examples of strategies and actions across project schools

Strategy	Associated actions
The breakfast programme continues as a strategy to support student attendance and physical wellbeing	Campus Principal negotiates with staff on provision/supervision of breakfast programme.
	Collect data that measures relationships between frequency of attending breakfast club, class attendance and student achievement.
	Consider alternatives to staff providing breakfast programme including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High School students providing assistance ■ negotiating with local Council on use of RSAS staff and/or establishment of RJCP funded programme.
Rewards and incentives are effective in improving attendance and commensurate with the responsibility and expectation that students must attend school	Staff workshop incentive initiatives and incorporation of data collection and monitoring strategies in the implementation of rewards'/incentives' programmes to enable reflection on the effectiveness of the endeavour.
	Negotiate with the Council for school attendance/good behaviour stamp to be a condition of entry to the pool and Youth/Sport and Recreation organised programmes.
	Camp eligibility and other extra-curricular activities are linked to attendance, e.g. boys' football camps and girls' camps, to be refined.
	School assemblies, which the community is invited to attend, to include recognition of students with improved/sustained attendance and who are contributing toward a positive school environment.
	RSAS and school to develop incentive programmes that acknowledge improved and/or sustained improvement by families. Options include combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ certificates ■ community BBQ ■ store vouchers ■ food pack ■ fortnightly/monthly/end of term raffle.
Shifting the local sports date	<p>One of the schools worked in a context where historically and statistically attendance in term 3 at the school is significantly lower than terms 1, 2 and 4. Three underlying factors often resulted in many students not attending school until week 7 term 3, effectively a 10-week period; sports' days, shows and royalties' payments. Discussions have been held regarding paying royalties during the school holidays if the holiday period was altered and this has been given in-principle community support. The local sports' day is set and difficult to change, however the community has agreed to a change of dates to the weekend of the local show.</p> <p>This change from the current dates moves the carnival away from NAPLAN Week and will increase the number of students available to sit the test. The school is considering continuing school to the Thursday prior to the local show to improve the level of attendance that occurs before the mid semester holiday. As a result of long term absences many students find it difficult to re-engage in their learning, the routines of the classroom and the school.</p>

Theme 2

Authentic partnerships

It was apparent that one of the most effective supports NCS consultants were able to provide was in brokering relationships between schools, RSAS provider, RSAS team and other parties/agencies. The project's experiences and outcomes suggest:

- Setting up structures and processes to facilitate a partnership approach to attendance assists the schools to see RSAS as a very useful additional resource and not an add-on programme which may conflict with their own programmes.
- Establishing a joint committee between the school and RSAS team that meets on a regular basis as part of a formal partnership is an effective strategy. Ideally members of the community would also be invited to be part of this committee. Trust and goodwill are essential if this is to be effective.
- A whole community conference at the commencement of the initiative helps establish positive relationships and clear roles and responsibilities.
- The RSAS team having a presence within the school is beneficial.
- In some contexts, the RSAS Coordinator is also engaged with the school through other roles. This is a powerful match when attendance consequences are being applied. Close relationships between the RSAS Coordinator and the school allow the same benefits to be realised.
- If communities can be encouraged to believe that attendance and cooperative behaviour are a factor for students being permitted to play at the local football carnivals – it is a powerful incentive for the older boys and young men to attend school.
- Assisting the school's Cultural and Community Liaison Officers in developing a draft 'position paper' about how the community begins to initiate conversations around cultural and community practices that impact school attendance. This includes identifying the protocols, liaison and consultation processes which need to be considered with appropriate cultural and community authorities and representatives. This ensures that any changes that might be proposed are raised and owned by the community, and if agreed upon, then they are implemented with broad endorsement and support.

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After nearly a term of RSAS operating, the school and RSAS team worked in isolation from each other and the Acting Principal and RSAS Coordinator had not formally met. The tension between the school and the RSAS team was obvious when the consultant first arrived.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) organised a full day awareness conference so that an exchange of information could occur. The consultant attended the programme that included representation from PMC, the RSAS provider, RSAS staff, support personnel, NCS, Education Department leaders and representatives from the school. At the completion of the conference a positive outlook began to emerge on the importance of building a higher level of trust between the people involved in the RSAS initiative and the school leadership and staff.

The PMC Regional Manager asked the NCS consultant on behalf of the group to establish an ongoing executive committee, chair it for the remainder of 2014 and prepare for a follow-up conference in February of 2015. All participants agreed to this arrangement.

At the conclusion of the day, five broad areas were nominated to improve attendance.

The five areas were:

- community coordination and promotion
- referral of students
- programmes, activities, rewards and recognition
- secondary learners (re-engaged learners)
- curriculum and learning.

Examples of strategies and actions across project schools

Strategy	Associated actions
RSAS team and school staff work collaboratively to support improved school attendance	<p>Campus leadership and RSAS team negotiate agreed practices and outcomes related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing a case management, feedback and reporting model that enables sharing of information and allocation of tasks related to students/families requiring support to improve school attendance. ■ Providing input from the school to the content of SAO training programmes that reflects the campus context and expectations. ■ Developing processes to enable the school to provide feedback on RSAS effectiveness and SAO performance. ■ Identifying opportunities for SAOs, within their role statement, to support the school's attendance endeavours. ■ SAO's role to include home visits that include a recognition from the school/RSAS provider to families when attendance is maintained and/or improving. ■ School, to the extent that its responsibilities and resources allow, supports prospective RSAS employees in completing legally required <i>Working With Children Check</i> process.

School–family–community partnerships

A common theme emerging from the schools was that when schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities work in partnership, students get better results from their education.

A broad strategy observed in each school was to engage in two-way dialogue with families and community about the importance of attendance and agreed ways of achieving improvements.

These approaches recognised families as first educators and welcomed them into the school, using various forums designed to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices were heard in the school.

case study

School 4 is a remote, co-educational, K–10 School with a 100% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment. The children come from a rich community language environment and some children speak and understand other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Prior to beginning school, children may have some interaction with Aboriginal English and minimal, if any, experience of Standard Australian English or written language. Staff and parents work together to educate the children in Two Way Learning.

The school attendance policy was written in 2013. The revision of this document was part of the work undertaken by the NCS consultant in collaboration with the school and the School Attendance Team. The document was revised with the School Attendance Team so that it reflected their work in the community.

There was also a School–Community Partnership Agreement developed in 2013. The Principal noted that this partnership was driven by the school; parents would attend meetings but the school initiated them. The partnership agreement included statements about coming to school, but needed some work around actions.

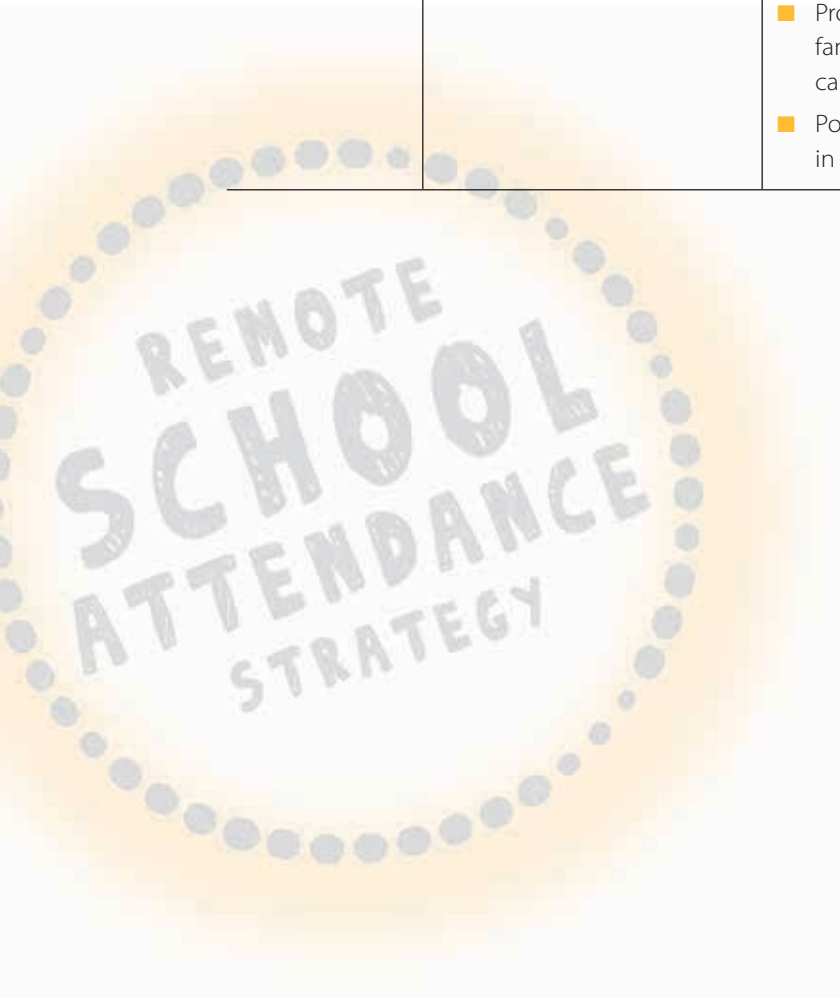
The agreement was revised with the school and community, and the strategies and actions listed on the opposite page added to the formal partnership agreement.

Examples of strategies and actions added to a School–Community Partnership (SCP)

SCP section	Action	How
Culture	Teach staff the community language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community people to run 1 hour classes 1 day a week after school. Classes will begin in term 4.
	Induction for new teachers and volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Teacher Assistants (ATAs) and community will run an induction in school at the beginning of the year and when new staff or volunteers come to the school. Revise funeral processes booklet and PowerPoint. Provide a list of resources pertaining to community language and culture. Set dates for inductions.
	Support the teaching of culture in school and teach language in classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATAs and community work with staff to support the teaching of culture in school. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> helping out on bush trips teaching language to classes telling stories and involvement in art classes.
Relationships	Hold family days at school and in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two family days to be run per term, one in the school and one in the community. The School Attendance Team will coordinate getting help from school staff (Principal and ATAs) and community people.
	Regular meetings for parents/community and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Principal and ATAs will coordinate with teachers. One per term in each classroom. Teachers invite parents to come into classrooms and have a look at what is happening. Parent group also have morning tea with staff.
Coming to school and learning	Keep rewarding good attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friday assemblies giving out attendance awards. Class attendance awards – bush trips, Friday pizza. Encourage families to come to school to see their children getting attendance awards.
	Talk to kids and families about the importance of coming to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By visiting homes and giving the message that there is no choice! Children have to come to school! No excuses. The School Attendance Team to make attendance posters and display in the community. Introduce school attendance cup for classes – to be awarded weekly. The School Attendance Team fax attendance record to the school at the end of each week showing reasons for absence.

Examples of strategies and actions added to an SCP (cont)

SCP section	Action	How
Coming to school and learning (cont)	Address teasing and bullying No violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and community members to keep encouraging their children not to tease or bully at home and at school. Families talk about the relationships within the community and classrooms and how each is connected. ATAs to stay in classroom. SAOs to be a presence in the school. Teachers set consistent approaches to addressing teasing and bullying – all teachers practice <i>the social and emotional learning for students'</i> model including restorative practice – set consistent punishment.
	Positive visits to families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATAs and teachers to visit families of every child at least once per term to discuss positive elements of that child. Provide teachers with a map of where all of the families live, names and contacts for parents/ carers. Post notices at shop to advertise parent visits and in the appropriate language.



Other examples of strategies and actions across project schools

Action	How
Parents/caregivers partner with the school to improve student attendance and/or behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff workshop the opportunities they can create to engage parents in their child's learning and share the responsibilities of promoting acceptable behaviour. Strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – open days (at least x 2) celebrating and recognising student, staff, community achievement and features – involving other agencies/services – advertising/promotion around community of upcoming events – ensuring events are energised, encourage fun and are participative – include days out in the community, not expecting people to always come to the school. ■ Each staff member commit to issuing invitations to parents and community members to share learning experiences which have been happening in the school.
The broader community shares the responsibility for improving school attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Campus Principal attends interagency meetings and forums to update/seek involvement from other stakeholders on attendance endeavours and opportunities/requests for support. ■ Discussions undertaken with store managers/Council to seek support of community store/roadhouse to not serve school aged students during school hours. ■ Class teachers actively seek out opportunities for other service agencies/stakeholders to be involved in learning programmes. ■ School works with local Council to identify options for an ongoing and viable playgroup programme for 0–3 year old children and their parents.
Facilitating school and parent community interaction with a common purpose to increase attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase families' confidence in talking to teachers about their children, e.g. supervisors and/or attendance officers inform parents that they will attend with them if they need to discuss issues with the school, and the school and community representatives discuss communication strategies for use within the town. ■ Increase the confidence and skill levels of Attendance Officers in collecting appropriate data. ■ Develop a visually appealing pamphlet explaining the attendance strategy and the importance of school attendance. ■ Each class displays on their door their current attendance data. ■ Community meeting organised with Elders to discuss the negative impact of sports' carnivals on attendance. ■ Establish a school entrance visual display of progress towards attendance targets.

Theme 3

The importance of RSAS capacity building

The areas of support provided by NCS consultants were primarily in the Attending and Connecting elements of the framework – a response to the initial diagnosis. A major part of this was working with RSAS providers and Attendance Supervisors and Officers to build their capacity to support improved attendance.

This took various forms including:

- Working with RSAS Supervisors and Officers to establish clear roles and provide guidance in line with the unique circumstances present in each community. Initial role statements for SAOs and SASs can then progressively become more complex as skills are learned.
- Formulating and mapping clear processes to be followed. For an example of a flowchart for this purpose refer page 28.
- Building individual capacity in a range of skills, knowledge and procedures. Examples included building data literacy (collection, analysis and interpretation and using it to inform changes in practice), the use of reflection tools for improvement, coaching and role-plays.
- Schools including RSAS staff in their professional development programmes.
- If possible the RSAS team to be gender inclusive. In the more remote settings a male presence is fundamental to relating to the older boys and young men. (Note: The current gender split across all RSAS sites is around 60% female and 40% male.)
- Schools employing RSAS officers in additional roles as support workers to provide additional employment opportunities.
- Relevant data collection forms be developed and progressively become more sophisticated.
- RSAS staff (and schools) provided more support on how and what data to collect and then particularly how to interpret the data. An effective strategy is to see the data as a way of telling stories.
- SAOs and SASs receive public recognition for a job well done through award certificates presented publicly.

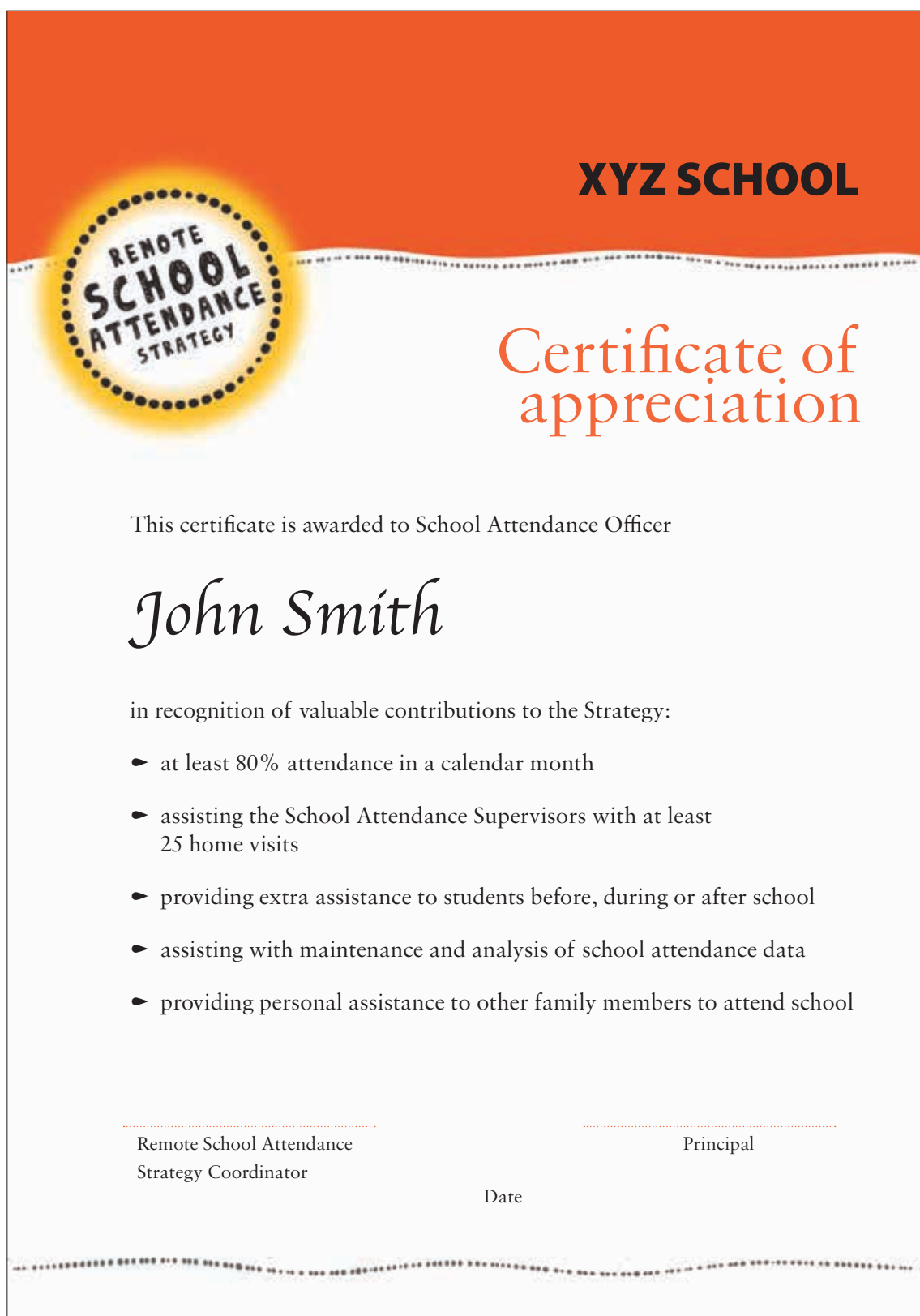
case study

The NCS consultant liaised with Campus Principal, the Council (RJCP provider for the RSAS) and the Cultural Advisor to identify strategies that may engage community members in taking on SAO positions.

Specific tasks undertaken:

- Conducted workshops and interviews with Campus Principal and teaching staff, RSAS Supervisor, the school appointed School Engagement Officer (SEO), Cultural Advisor, Local Council RSAS Manager and Executive Principal to identify the barriers and opportunities related to the operation of RSAS.
- Interviewed community members who have been engaged as SEOs or considered taking up the position and identify why they are no longer engaged in the role or did not proceed with applying for the SAO position.
- Documented outcomes of discussions for consideration by the Local Council RSAS Manager.
- Developed a plan based on findings for consideration by RSAS Support Manager.

EXAMPLE OF A CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION AWARDED TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFFICER




EXAMPLE OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFFICER REFLECTION QUESTIONS

XYZ SCHOOL

School Attendance Officer reflection questions

Name



Parts of my job	I like this part of the job	I don't like this part of the job	I know what I am expected to do	I need some help to do part of the job better
Being in the community getting kids ready for school				
Helping kids when they are at school <ul style="list-style-type: none">– in classes– helping individual kids at school– Learning on Country– sport, art, culture or other programmes				
Doing home visits to find out why kids aren't at school				
Getting support from others for kids coming to school and to promote the RSAS and the job that I do				
Attending meetings with the RSAS team				

What parts of your job would you most like to change?

What training would you like so that you can do your job better?

What parts of how the RSAS operates should we continue doing the same?

What parts of how the RSAS operates should we think about changing?

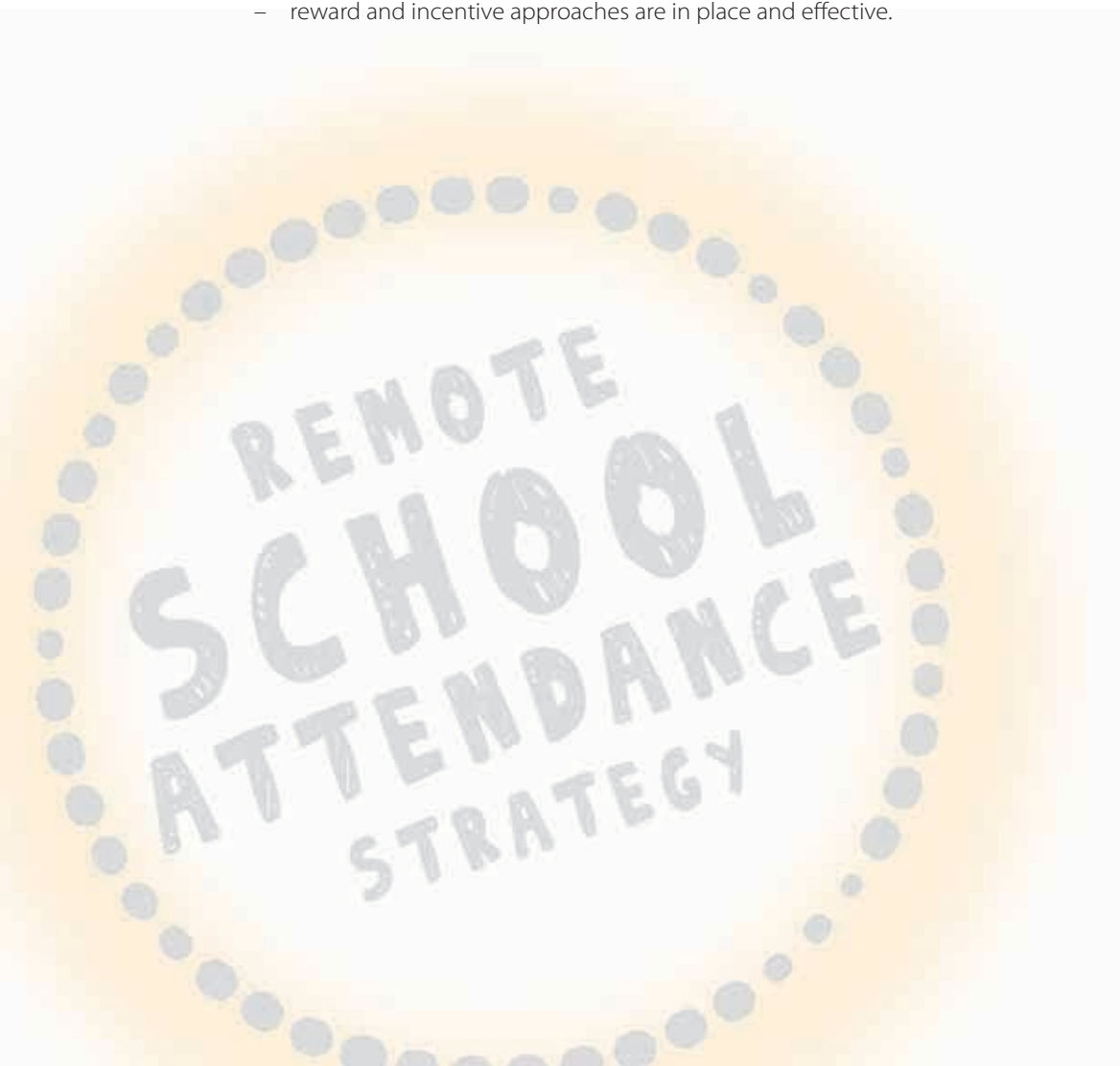
Theme 4

The use of data

Schools that were having success in improving attendance demonstrated enhanced capacity to understand and use attendance data.

The following capacities were evident in school leaders, teachers, community and RSAS Supervisors:

- The extent to which attendance and absence data are analysed and used effectively:
 - understanding of current absence patterns and the factors contributing to them
 - patterns of attendance are understood, e.g. for year levels and particular student cohorts
 - reasons for/factors contributing to current attendance/absence patterns are known (with acknowledgement that they are often complex with patterns established prior to starting school).
- The extent to which the design and implementation of strategies to reduce absences/improve attendance are based on the data analysis:
 - targeted attendance building actions, designed to operate at various levels and address the range of factors that contribute to low attendance rates, including whole school, community, individual student and family focused approaches
 - reward and incentive approaches are in place and effective.



case study

SCHOOL CONTEXT

At School 2, the RSAS commenced in week 10 of term 1, 2014. The RSAS staff consisted of a part-time Coordinator, two SASs and eight SAOs, one from each family (skin) group who are responsible for, and to, their own family grouping. They are made welcome in the school and view themselves as part of the school staff as well as being independent members of the RSAS staff. They have their own room in which they display daily attendance data on whiteboards along with lists of current targeted students and maps of individual student homes within each town camp.

The Coordinator, Principal and the school's Truancy Officer work closely together and share data. The Truancy Officer attends the school each fortnight and student access to Sports Academy outings and school based excursions is based on acceptable attendance and behaviour. Every classroom for the older students has a list of programmes on offer and a reminder that attendance and behaviour are considered for access.

WHAT WORKED?

Some data related actions implemented as part of the NCS ACT approach have been:

- The alignment of explicit attendance expectations with explicit whole school practice.
- The school is improving processes for recording attendance and absence in the roll, emphasising the use of appropriate coding.
- A sign displaying current attendance and the next week's targets at the front of the school.
- The community mapped with student locations in each camp and assigned to an SAO from that skin group who has been given responsibility for home visits when required.
- Individual class teachers consulted each Friday to develop a list of 5 or 6 students to follow up the next week. These students are allocated to SAOs related to the family. A register has been developed to support this information.
- A Friday rewards' day developed to improve Friday attendance with a special breakfast and afternoon session at the pool for students attending more than 60%. Other students receive a games' session back at school.

Examples of strategies and actions across project schools

Strategy	Action
Teachers have ready access to campus specific data upon which individual student attendance trends can be tracked and the effectiveness of the strategies they are implementing to improve attendance, can be gauged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff workshop to identify the type of data which they would like and the form in which it should be presented. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How does campus data compare with performance of other campuses and like schools? – Clarity on the definition of what constitutes attendance and what RSAS considers attendance to be, i.e. for how much of school day. – Using % of attendance as a criterion in analysing literacy/numeracy performance. ■ Campus Principal address with Leadership Team, provision of purposeful data for teachers. ■ Campus planning and implementation processes include identifying baseline data and monitoring practices for key attendance strategies that will enable judgements to be made on the effectiveness of the practices being implemented. ■ Monitor when a student is residing in the community, the % that they are attending school.

Theme 5

The importance of simple and clear communications about attendance

Various documents were produced in response to an identified need to ensure communication with all stakeholders was clear, simple and using local language.

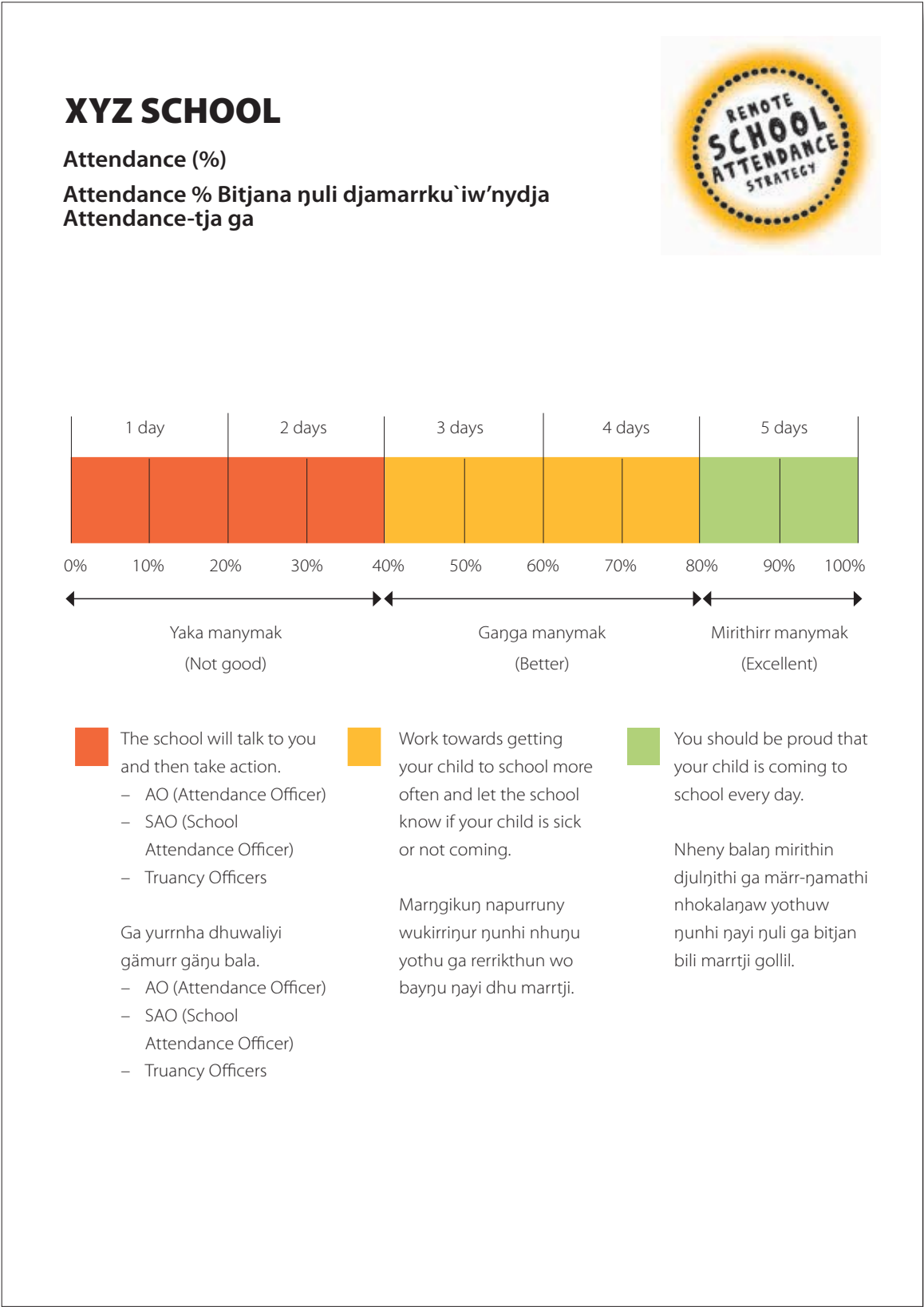
Examples included:

- large attendance target signs with current progress visible within the community and school
- documented clear and simple explanations of non-attendance implications, e.g. a school one-page 'Attendance % Bitjana njuli djamarrku`iw'nydja Attendance-tja ga' sheet
- using RSAS staff to hand deliver newsletters and deliver messages and also to take teachers into the community
- RSAS team to bring parents to assemblies and also to parent/teacher interviews as part of their Connecting role.



REMOTE
SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE
STRATEGY

EXAMPLE OF AN ATTENDANCE SHEET IN LOCAL LANGUAGE



Theme 6

Clear processes

Clearly mapped processes and systems that were understood and implemented by all are important for ensuring that what has been planned is actually happening. These processes cover all elements of the ACT framework.

Examples of strategies and actions across project schools

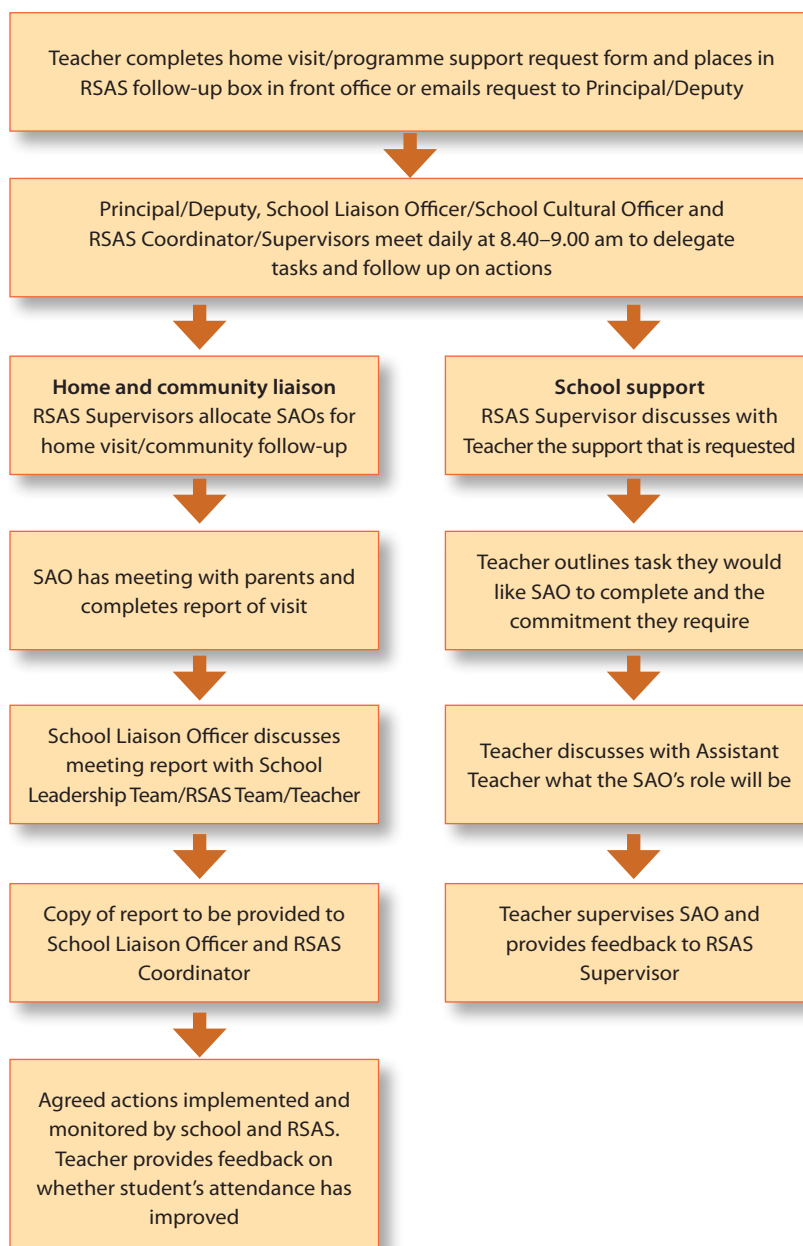
Strategy	Action
Developing processes so that all Aboriginal workers in the school model appropriate attendance and school readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Each SAS (x2) and SAO (x10) to have their own children washed, dressed and waiting outside for school pick up by 8am. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supervisors participate in the bus run. – The Coordinator randomly attends one bus run per week. – The Coordinator meets with the Principal weekly. ■ Each SAO will target one family for attendance as directed by the Supervisor and help to ensure those children are washed, dressed and waiting outside for school pick up by 8am. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SAS meet with the Principal daily at 12.30 pm for direction on target families and feedback on attendance. – SAOs on a rostered basis to join the bus run for its three trips prior to school breakfast. ■ When the SAS, SAOs and target families are regularly attending at 80%, target additional families whilst still monitoring previous families. Progressively more families will be targeted. ■ Families of students who have made a 10% attendance improvement will receive a small shop voucher and those families who achieve 90% attendance for at least one week will be rewarded with a more significant shop voucher. Alternatively, each month a special cultural day is provided for these students. The programme is conducted by Elders and is gender based. RSAS staff assist. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Students achieving the target, names published and posted in all public offices. – A special BBQ provided for all students who achieve 80% attendance.

EXAMPLE OF A SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFFICER SUPPORT REQUEST PROCESS

XYZ SCHOOL

SAO support request process

Illustration: A teacher who has concerns about a particular student's attendance might request SAO support. This might include a home visit or an SAO helping out in a class to assist identified student/s settling in after being away from school or who are regularly staying away from school.



EXAMPLE OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFFICER'S JOBS

XYZ SCHOOL**School Attendance Officer's jobs**

Name of School Attendance Officer:



Each School Attendance Officer's job includes:

1. **Helping families and students in getting on the bus and to school each day from my allocated area (7.30–8.30 am)**
2. **A daily meeting to be given jobs for the day (8.45–9.15 am)**
3. **Being in the community to promote and encourage school attendance – daily tasks from the following list (9.15–11.30 am):**

Home visit to families if students aren't attending school

Name of students _____

☐

Shops

☐

Oval

☐

Basketball Courts

☐

Beach

☐

Other place where students meet _____

Support the school to improve attendance:*Please tick the programmes in which you will be helping*☐

Breakfast Club (7.40–8.45 am)

☐

Learning on Country

☐

Sport and Fitness

Working in the classrooms:

☐

Families as First Teachers (FAFT), Pre-school, Transition

☐

Primary Years 1 to 3

☐

Primary Years 4 to 6

☐

Middle School Years 7 to 9

☐

Secondary Years 10 to 12

☐

Other? Please write down: _____

Theme 7

The importance of leadership

It was evident that leadership performs a critical role in achieving improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student attendance and outcomes. This applied to school, RSAS (provider and staff), community and regional PMC network staff.

Some threads emerging from the work include:

- The importance of the provider having an existing presence within the community. Such presence assists in developing a much closer relationship with the community, which is important when dealing with any issues that arise.
- The importance of effective management and interpersonal skills for performing the role of SAS.
- The importance of formal and informal relationships between the SAS and the school staff member responsible for attendance. These relationships and regular (e.g. weekly) meetings facilitate the combination of resources to make home visit follow-ups and targeted interventions more effective.

Leadership strategies and actions across project schools

Strategy	Action
Raising the skill levels of RSAS staff, improving communication facilities and rewarding appropriate behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Develop a community supported Attendance Improvement Strategy.■ Develop a community sense of responsibility for attendance.■ Conduct a whole town and community campaign to increase attendance.■ Establish visual displays of attendance data and success posters of individual students for display in the shop and community facilities.■ Ensure all students are referred to clinic for regular eye and ear checks.■ Principal and Attendance Officers meet to discuss targeted students.■ Each class to establish attendance targets, monitor and reward results.■ Each SAO and SAS can clearly articulate what their role entails.■ Prepare a leaflet on the support offered at the school for all families.■ A brief whole school assembly at the end of first break to discuss attendance.■ Attendance articles in newsletters.■ Appropriate attendance used as a gateway for excursions and sports.■ Develop a solution focused matrix of non-attendance factors in regards to 'individual', 'school', 'family' and 'community'.

Appendix 1: Example of a School Attendance Improvement Strategy Plan

ATTENDING		Timeframe: commencing in 2015 and then ongoing until the end of 2017			
Goal: To improve attendance		Target/s (measure/s of success): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10% increase in the number of students achieving 80% and 90% attendance Attendance in 2015 increases by 10% Attendance in 2017 is approximately 90% 			
Broad Improvement Strategy: Processes to sustain an improvement in school attendance with a focus on Monday and Friday attendances, current 40% and 60% attendees, and new enrolments becoming school ready					
Actions <i>(how the strategy will be implemented)</i>		Responsibility <i>(who)</i>	School resources	Start <i>(when)</i>	Finish <i>(when)</i>
Liaise closely with the Preschool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support the Preschool teacher to support all families to access the service RSAS staff to liaise with the Preschool teacher to take information to community members RSAS staff		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preschool teacher RSAS staff Principal or delegate 		December 2014	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assist with the Red Cross morning breakfast programme an SAO is rostered on, accompanies each bus run and maintains a record of use the Coordinator and SAS meet with the Principal or delegate weekly visit homes to ensure children are school ready and waiting for the bus the RSAS staff collect parents and sit with them at assembly to watch awards participate in a 'yarning' group 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Coordinator RSAS staff Principal or delegate Aboriginal Education Team Principal 	School bus Morning tea – \$250	Began during 2014, continue to implement Term 1, 2015	Ongoing
Aboriginal Education Committee liaise with RSAS staff to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> erect a school attendance sign and maintain to track progress against the target implement the Aboriginal Education Plan and the Community Action Plan 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Education Team RSAS Coordinator SAS Principal 	Sign – \$500	Term 1, 2015	Ongoing
Rewards for increased attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> weekly assembly attendance awards provide rewards for families of students who have sustained a 10% attendance improvement over a term at the end of each term a monster BBQ/Pizza lunch for all 80%+ attendees a Friday afternoon fun/pool day when school attendance maintains 80% for a month 		Provide rewards for families of students who have sustained a 10% attendance improvement over a term	\$2000	Term 1, 2015	Ongoing

CONNECTING		Timeframe: commencing in 2014 and then ongoing until the end of 2017			
Goal: To strengthen family and community engagement in the day to day functioning of the teaching & learning, attendance and content development programmes		Target/s (measure/s of success):			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Average student attendance at, or better than, 85% by the end of 2017■ At least 80% of families to attend teacher/parent interviews			
Broad Improvement Strategy:		To develop supportive structures to bring the community into the school and to take the school into the community so that a two-way educational partnership develops			
Actions <i>(how the strategy will be implemented)</i>		Responsibility <i>(who)</i>	School resources	Start <i>(when)</i>	Finish <i>(when)</i>
Raise the whole school profile of the Aboriginal Education Team <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ the Aboriginal Education Team to brief staff early in the school year on their strategies and processes. An emphasis to be placed on the handbook checklist items■ organise a whole school and community NAIDOC week■ the 'Deadly Classroom' to be the transition into school classroom for students who have not attended school for a lengthy period of term■ liaise with RSAS staff for sharing home visits and food provision programmes RSAS staff to liaise with the Aboriginal Education Team and Elders to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ reduce the impact of sports and cultural events■ develop community acceptance of the 'no school, no shop' policy■ develop structured after school activities		<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Aboriginal Education Team■ Principal■ RSAS staff			
Take the school and learning into the community <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ at least once per term each teacher involved in an after school activity to meet community members. Staff meetings will be suspended for this week■ each month a year level of the school conducts one lesson in the community and family members invited to attend■ Post-compulsory section of the school teach life skills (welding, finance, cooking, trades, arts, financial literacy etc.) and local community members actively sought to join the classes		<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Principal■ Leadership Team■ all teachers■ RSAS team■ teacher assistants■ Aboriginal Education Team	Leaflet printing – \$200 Community based lessons – \$500 Life skills classes – \$5000	March 2015	Ongoing
Communicate regularly with parents <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ the Aboriginal Education Team with RSAS staff produce a special newsletter each term and hand deliver to the students' homes■ provide parents with a bus service to attend a special whole school assembly each term to celebrate/reward attendance. Special BBQ for families with their children after the assembly■ RSAS staff, Aboriginal Education Team members and teacher assistants support families to visit the school to talk with teachers for parent/teacher interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Principal■ Leadership Team■ all teachers■ RSAS Team■ teacher assistants■ Aboriginal Education Team	Newsletters \$500	Term 1, 2015	Ongoing

Learn about and teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ all teachers to become familiar with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander significant dates in the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries as well as pre-European settlement history ■ Elders to teach some history; induct staff into cultural understanding at 1x staff meeting/year ■ school negotiates with the community a calendar of Aboriginal events to be celebrated ■ Aboriginal Education Committee to liaise with local volunteers to organise excursions for men's and women's based activities within the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aboriginal Education Team ■ Elders ■ Leadership Team ■ all teachers 	Excursions \$500	February 2015	Ongoing
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TEACHING AND LEARNING					
Timeframe: commencing in 2015 and then ongoing until the end of 2017					
Goal: To develop an understanding of the links between curriculum, teaching & learning, and building relationships, with improving attendance and improved academic outcomes					
Target/s (measure/s of success):					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2015 NAPLAN data to register 'close to similar schools' ■ At least 95% of eligible students participate in NAPLAN testing 					
Broad Improvement Strategy:					
Classroom teachers accepting responsibility for improving attendance (the concept embedded that 'we all own the problem and then we all own the solution')					

Actions (how the strategy will be implemented)	Responsibility (who)	Resources	Start (when)	Finish (when)
An explicit model of instruction used in all classrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Section Coordinators 		Immediately	Ongoing
Include 'culturally inclusive curriculum' as a factor for improvement in staff individual performance plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Principal or delegate ■ Coordinators ■ Staff 		Term 1, 2015	Ongoing
The RSAS Coordinator to introduce RSAS Supervisors and RSAS Attendance Officers to teachers at a staff meeting to discuss the progress of the Remote School Attendance Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Principal ■ RSAS Coordinator 		Term 4, 2014	Ongoing once per term
All teachers to hand deliver at least one newsletter per term to each family in their class. RSAS staff and teacher assistants used as community heroes to accompany staff and prepare families for the dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aboriginal Education Team ■ Home School Liaison Officer ■ classroom teachers ■ RSAS team ■ teacher assistants 		Term 1, 2015	Ongoing
Whole school plan for and support of NAIDOC week celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aboriginal Education Team ■ Principal ■ all teaching staff and assistants ■ all RSAS staff 	~ \$1000	NAIDOC week, 2015	Annually
All classrooms engaged in a climate of supportively competing for increased monthly attendance in their classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ classroom teachers 	Rewards and posters ~ \$1000 N.B. Rewards not necessarily \$ based	Term 1, 2015	Ongoing

LEADERSHIP		Timeframe: commenced during term 4, 2014 and then ongoing until the end of 2017			
Goal: To Inform and empower the community to improve school attendance		Target/s (measure/s of success): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All newsletters highlight attendance information ■ Attendance data reflects the planned system improvement growth 			
Broad Improvement Strategy: Improving communication processes and rewarding appropriate behaviour					
Actions <i>(how the strategy will be implemented)</i>		Responsibility <i>(who)</i>	Resources	Start <i>(when)</i>	Finish <i>(when)</i>
Develop a School Attendance Improvement Strategy Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ NCS Consultant ■ Principal 		Term 4, 2014	December, 2014
Facilitate a representative professional development programme to commence 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ NCS Consultant ■ Principal ■ RSAS team 	Support with costs for the programme	February 10, 2015	February 10, 2015
Develop a sense of responsibility for attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ conduct a whole town and community campaign to increase attendance ■ establish visual displays of attendance data at the front gate and success posters of individual students for display in the shops and community facilities ■ provide updates to the local newspaper 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Principal ■ RSAS Coordinator/provider ■ Community Elders ■ Aboriginal Education Team 		Term 4, 2014	Ongoing
Principal, The Aboriginal Education Coordinator and Attendance Officers meet to discuss targeted students		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Principal ■ Aboriginal Education Team ■ RSAS staff and Coordinator 		Term 3, 2014	Ongoing
Establish attendance targets in each class, monitor and reward results		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ classroom teachers 	\$1000	Term 4, 2014	Ongoing
Develop alternative options to suspensions and exclusions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Principal ■ Year Level Coordinators ■ Aboriginal Education Team 			
Appropriate attendance used as a gateway for excursions and sports		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Principal 		Term 1, 2015	Ongoing

Appendix 2: Glossary

Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS)	<p>RSAS is an Australian Government initiative (implemented by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) that operates in 73 schools across 69 communities in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.</p> <p>RSAS is a partnership between the Australian Government, and state and territory governments, schools, Remote Jobs and Communities (RJCP) providers and non-RJCP providers and Indigenous communities. It is a partnership set up to support local, flexible solutions to improve rates of school attendance.</p> <p>As part of this initiative, RSAS providers were funded to employ local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to work as School Attendance Supervisors (SASs) and School Attendance Officers (SAOs).</p>
RSAS provider	<p>'RSAS provider' is the term used to describe the organisations funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to deliver the Strategy across the participating communities. The majority of RSAS providers are also RJCP providers. There are also non-RJCP providers and some participating schools are themselves being funded as the RSAS provider. The RSAS providers recruit and employ the SASs and SAOs and generally support their employees (as would any employer) including by providing training, transport and office requirements. Providers will also create new activities to promote school attendance – in consultation with the school and the community.</p>
School Attendance Supervisor (SAS)	<p>Most SASs are employed full-time over 52 weeks a year. The key tasks of the role include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ supervising and mentoring a team of School Attendance Officers (SAOs) ■ organising resources to assist SAOs to do their jobs ■ liaising between the school and the community to assist the implementation of attendance policies and priorities. <p><i>Note: In NSW the position is called School Attendance Mentor (SAM) and in WA School Engagement Supervisor (SES).</i></p>
School Attendance Officer (SAO)	<p>Most SAOs are employed part-time (averaging 10–15 hours per week) over 52 weeks a year. The work that SAOs do to get children to school can be quite varied but key tasks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ making a daily check on children not attending school ■ visiting the homes of children not attending school and places where children 'hang out' ■ talking to parents and carers about the help that is needed to get children to school. <p>With the agreement of the school and RSAS provider, SAOs may also assist with engagement activities on the school grounds or in the classroom.</p> <p><i>Note: In WA this position is called School Engagement Officer (SEO).</i></p>

School Attendance Team or RSAS team	School Attendance Supervisors (SASs) and School Attendance Officers (SAOs) make up the School Attendance Teams in each community participating in RSAS. Team members are local people from the community who work with parents and families to support school-aged children to go to school every day and on time. The SASs and SAOs are responsive to local needs meaning the tasks they perform can vary from community to community.
RSAS Coordinator	A small number of RSAS communities have an additional RSAS Coordinator position funded through the initiative. The Coordinator's role is to liaise between the RSAS provider, the SAOs and the school.
Truancy Officer	Truancy Officers are state or territory positions, they are not connected to RSAS.
Sports Coordinator	Sports Coordinators are local community or school positions, they are not connected to RSAS.
ACT to improve student attendance framework	<p>The ACT to improve student attendance framework was developed by NCS to assist schools in identifying strategies to improve student attendance and outcomes that were appropriate to the school's context. The ACT framework consists of three key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Attending – A ■ Connecting – C ■ Teaching (& Learning) – T.
Attendance Improvement Strategy Plan	As part of this project each school developed an Attendance Improvement Strategy Plan. The plan template included sections for identifying strategies and associated actions for Attending, Connecting, Teaching and Leadership.
RSAS Action Planning	<p>The RSAS action-planning template is provided to all RSAS teams to assist with planning of strategies to improve attendance. The template contains five domains of 'readiness':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ready Children ■ Ready Families ■ Ready Community ■ Ready Services ■ Ready School.

Notes

- 1 National Curriculum Services 2012, *What Works. The Work Program. Success in remote schools: a research study of eleven improving remote schools* 1st edition, published by National Curriculum Services Pty Ltd, Abbotsford, ISBN 978-1-875864-73-7.

National Curriculum Services 2013, *What Works. The Work Program. Sustainable School and Community Partnerships: a research study*, 1st edition, published by National Curriculum Services Pty Ltd, Abbotsford, ISBN 978-1-875864-74-4.

