

USING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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Australia's educational challenge: Young people are behind at each stage

EARLY YEARS



Developmentally
vulnerable

One in three children in most disadvantaged communities is developmentally vulnerable in one or more key areas when they start school.

PRIMARY YEARS



Numeracy

94% of Year 5 students with a parent who has a uni qualification are above the national minimum standard, compared to **61%** of children whose parents did not complete Yr 12.

SECONDARY YEARS



Year 12
completion

Around **30%** difference based on socioeconomic status of students.

POST-SCHOOL YEARS

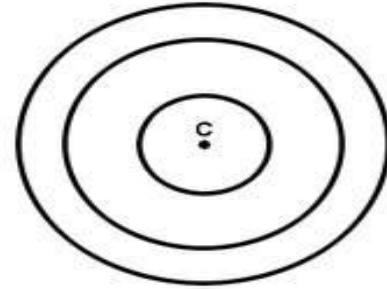


Post-school
engagement

41% of 24 year olds from most disadvantaged backgrounds were not fully engaged in work or study, compared to **17%** among most advantaged.

Multiple factors impact children and young people's development

1. **Personal characteristics** - eg intelligence, social skills, health, self esteem, aspirations
2. **Family** - eg resources, parental aspirations, engagement in child's learning
3. **Peers** - eg aspirations, attitudes to education, risk taking behaviour
4. **Learning and care institutions** -eg teacher quality, student mix, school's expectations
5. **Community and societal** - eg economic and infrastructure, role models, social cohesion, safety



These factors shape a child's likely pathway through life, but pathways aren't pre-determined and they can be influenced.

THE SMITH FAMILY'S *LEARNING FOR LIFE* PROGRAM



The *Learning for Life* program - history



- Began almost 30 years ago
- Research showed key role of **education** in breaking cycle of disadvantage
- **Consultations** with families identified they would value support with children's education

Research + consultations with families ➡ *Learning for Life*

Key underpinnings of *Learning for Life*

- Ecological approach
- Early intervention and long-term approach (Heckman)
- Parental engagement
- High expectations
- Reciprocity and accountability
- 'Beyond school' – complements but in addition to school
- Outcomes focus

Learning for Life scholarship



Parent and community engagement

Key programs at different life stages

EARLY YEARS



- *Let's Count*
- *Let's Read*

PRIMARY YEARS



- *Student2student* reading program
- Learning Clubs

SECONDARY YEARS



- *iTrack* career mentoring
- Creative enrichment
- Career and post-school pathways
- Work Inspiration

POST-SCHOOL YEARS



- Tertiary mentoring
- Financial Literacy

PARENTS AND CARERS



- *Tech Packs*
- Financial Literacy

**Balanced
intervention
across
young
person's life**



Learning for Life scholarship – students can begin in the 1st year of school and continue through to the end of tertiary

THE FAMILIES SUPPORTED BY *LEARNING FOR LIFE*



Learning for Life families



- **34,000** students nationally; 18,000 families
- **94** communities across all states/territories
- All **low income** families – Health Care Card or pension
- 18% **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** background
- Over half are **single parent**, 6% grandparent/kinship/foster
- 40% of students and 50% of parents have a **health** or **disability** issue

Learning for Life families



- 71% of parents **not in the labour force** or unemployed
- 60% haven't completed Yr 12
- 20% of students have been at **4 or more schools** and 1 in 20 have been at 6 or more schools
- ➡ Highly disadvantaged children, at risk of poor educational outcomes
- 50%+ of secondary and tertiary students on program for **6+ years**

LfL students are more disadvantaged than their peers

Compared to other students in same schools, LfL students are:

- more likely to be of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** background
- far less likely to have a parent who has completed **Year 12 or university**
- far less likely to have a parent who is **employed**.

For example: 18% of LfL students in NSW have a parent/carer who is employed compared to 79% of students in the same schools (NSW Department of Education data).

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION APPROACH

Research and evaluation approach

- Longitudinal and multi – method
- Unique student identifier
- Admin, demographic and outcomes data base
- Analysis: Aggregate, individual, sub-groups, year-on-year
- In-house research and policy design and implementation teams, Linkage grant (ISSR UQ, SCU, SPRC UNSW), relationships with state Depts of Education, ACARA

OUTCOMES OF LFL STUDENTS



Measures of effectiveness

LONGER-TERM OUTCOMES



SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES



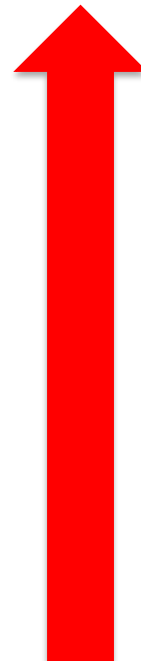
PROGRAMS
Build skills &
knowledge &
influence
attitudes &
behaviours

- Young people are in education, training, and/or work
- Young people complete Yr 12 or equivalent
- Young people stay engaged with learning

- Improved literacy and numeracy
- Improved confidence (self-efficacy)
- Improved motivation and aspiration
- Enhanced networks and relationships
- Improved knowledge/understanding
- Improved or sustained school attendance

Let's Count, Let's Read, Learning for Life, Student2Student, iTrack mentoring, Learning Clubs, Creative enrichment, careers/post-school options workshops, Work Inspiration, Tertiary Mentoring, Tech Packs, Financial literacy

ENGAGEMENT ADVANCEMENT ATTENDANCE



Measures of effectiveness of *Learning for Life*

- Improve **school attendance** over time to 90%
- Increase the proportion of students who advance to **Year 12**
- Increase proportion of students engaged in **employment and further education** after they leave the program

Increased school attendance

The Smith Family's average attendance rates, 2014

91.3%

For *Learning for Life* primary school students

86.9%

For *Learning for Life* secondary school students

87.3%

For *Learning for Life* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students

- Steady year-on-year improvement for all three rates since 2012.

National comparison

The average attendance rate for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 1 to 7 in all government schools is **83.0%**, well below the **87.3%** of Aboriginal students on *Learning for Life*.

Improved Year 12 completion

The Smith Family's advancement rate



68.2%

Learning for Life students who were in Year 10 in 2013 and advanced to Year 12 or its equivalent by 2015. Up from 60% for the period 2010–12.

- **6,500** students across Australia have been supported on *Learning for Life* to complete Year 12 between 2012 and 2015.

National comparison

The national Year 12 completion rate for 19 year olds from Australia's lowest socioeconomic decile is **60.6%** and for the second lowest decile is 61.4%. This is well below The Smith Family's Advancement Rate of **68.2%**.

Successful post school transitions

84.2% of former *Learning for Life* students are in work or study 12 months after leaving the program

Fully engaged

65.8%

Partly engaged

18.4%



For **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** young people, **74.2%** were engaged – 54.6% were fully engaged and 19.6% were partially engaged.

For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal former students who were not engaged, 80% were actively **seeking employment** and one in six was **volunteering**.

National comparison – post-school employment, education and training

- **65.8%** of former *Learning for Life* students are fully engaged in employment, education or training 12 months after leaving the program. They are mainly aged 17 to 19.
- Nationally, **58.9%** of all 24 year olds from the lowest SES decile and 62.9% from the second lowest decile are fully engaged. This is well below the rate for former *Learning for Life* students who are also much younger and have had less time to establish themselves, post-school.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



Continuous improvement

- All 3 student outcomes have shown **year on year** improvement
- **Data, evaluation** and **research** have driven program refinements
- More **tailored support** for particular groups of students and at particular times (eg those struggling with school attendance, transitioning to high school, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background students)
- Changes to frequency and nature of **engagement with families**
- Re-defining roles of **staff**, role **specialisation**

Continuous improvement



- Greater **focus** on supporting students to complete Year 12
- **Training** for LfL staff on working with highly disadvantaged families
- Refined **induction** program for new staff

Contributing factors for improvements

- Program outcomes linked to **mission** and **staff** commitment
- Embedded in **5 year strategic plan**
- **Cross organisational buy-in**
 - Leadership
 - Structures, processes, frequent communication
- **In-house capability**
 - People, systems and technology
- **Public accountability**

GOOD PROGRESS, JOURNEY CONTINUES...



- Evidenced-informed program which has evolved over **30** years
- Early intervention, long-term approach, responsive to changing needs
- Highly targeted
- Reciprocity, parental engagement, high expectations
- Use of data and evidence is helping to drive improved outcomes
- Already delivered at scale
- Cost effective, involving multiple partnerships and volunteers
- SIMNA Award for Excellence in Social Impact measurement
- Improving educational and employment outcomes of highly disadvantaged young Australians, with further improvements possible

QUESTIONS

Further information is available at www.thesmithfamily.com.au, including a research report on the LfL program

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