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Children's entitlement to positive educational outcomes: Using research, policy and practice to improve the lives of disadvantaged young Australians

Australian Social Policy Conference

Anne Hampshire
Head of Research and Advocacy
Anne.Hampshire@thesmithfamily.com.au

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Overview

1. Entrenched disadvantage and education in Australia
2. The Smith Family's programs and approach
3. Tracking educational outcomes for disadvantaged young people
4. Some of what we're learning





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ENTRENCHED DISADVANTAGE AND EDUCATION

Entrenched disadvantage

- Around 5% of Australians experience severe disadvantage
- 500,000+ children in jobless households/ poverty
- Characteristics associated with risk of long-term disadvantage include:
 - low educational attainment
 - Indigeneity
 - jobless household
 - long term health/disability,
 - living in disadvantaged area
 - age
- Compounding impact for some children and young people



Addressing entrenched
disadvantage in Australia
April 2015

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 eg social, cognitive, communication

PRIMARY YEARS



Numeracy

More than 10% difference in Year 5 students at or above national minimum standard based on parents' education.

SECONDARY YEARS



Year 12 completion

More than 10% difference based on socio-economic status of students. 2-3 year gap in performance in maths, science, reading, ICT between high and low SES at age 15.

POST-SCHOOL YEARS



Post-school engagement

Post-school, 42% of 17–24 year olds from most disadvantaged backgrounds not fully engaged in work or study, cf 17% among most advantaged.

Education

- Key enabler for social and economic participation
- Development of child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (CROC)
- Multiple influences on young person's development
- Early intervention – mitigates risk or prevents emerging problem getting worse
- Balanced intervention for disadvantaged children
 - Invest early and keep on investing throughout young person's life
 - Gives best return on investment (James Heckman)

Targeting disadvantaged young people



- Review of School Funding conservatively estimated \$4.4 billion per annum spent nationally on addressing educational disadvantage (2009-10 data)
- “Insufficient data available to establish to what extent existing programs are effective in reducing the impact of disadvantage on educational outcomes because few have been evaluated, and fewer still have been evaluated with student outcomes as a focus” (ACER 2011)
- Loss of COAG Reform Council ➔ less annual visibility of progress for different groups of young people



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THE SMITH FAMILY'S SCALE AND PROGRAMS

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
- *Girls @ the Centre*

POST-SCHOOL YEARS



- Tertiary mentoring
- Financial Literacy

PARENTS AND CARERS



- *Tech Packs*
- Financial Literacy

- 134,000 children, young people, parents/ carers pa
- 34,000 LfL
- 94 communities



Learning for Life
scholarship

Learning for Life scholarship



Parent and community engagement

Parental engagement in children's learning is bigger predictor of how children do in school than family's socioeconomic status.

It is one tool that can help close the gap in achievement between children of different socioeconomic backgrounds.



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THE FAMILIES WE ARE SUPPORTING

Characteristics of *LfL* students and families



- 34,000 students nationally from 94 communities in all states/territories
- All low income families – Health Care Card or pension
- 18% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background
- 68% of parents not in the labour force or unemployed
- Over half are single parent; a third of households are 6 or more
- Around 40% of students and 50% of parents have a health issue
- 20% of students have been at 4 or more schools and 1 in 20 have been at 6 or more schools
- Over half of our secondary students have been on program for 5 or more years

How disadvantaged are LfL students relative to their peers?

	Total student population for 50 NSW schools (n=31,478) %	TSF LFL students in the same schools (n=2,591) %
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background	14.3	24.7
Parent/Carer Year 12 completion or Post-school education	80.3	39.4
Parent/Carer University education	12.5	3.4
Parent/Carer Employed	79.0	18.4

LfL students are more disadvantaged than their peers:

- More likely to be of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background
- Less likely to have a parent who has completed Yr 12 or university
- Less likely to have a parent who is employed

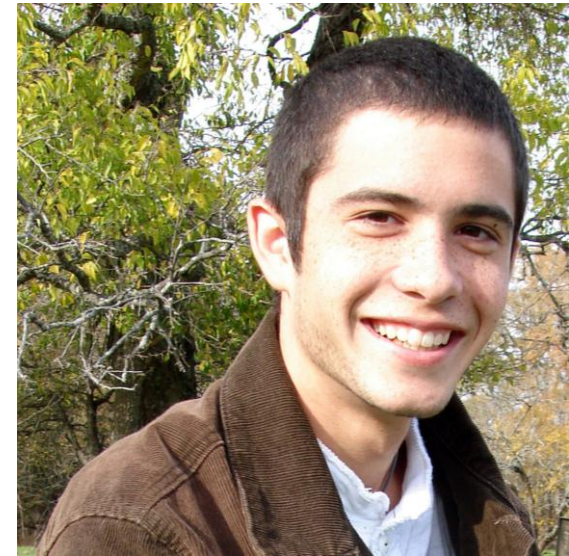


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OUR OUTCOMES

Short and longer-term outcomes

- Outcomes Based Accountability measures for all programs
- Shorter term outcomes (eg literacy, knowledge, confidence, motivation, networks) are foundations/stepping stones to 3 longer-term outcomes:
 - Improve school attendance over time to 90%
 - Increase proportion of students who advance to Year 12
 - Increase proportion of students engaged in employment and further education after they leave the program
- Research informed, policy and practice relevant



Increased school attendance

The Smith Family's average attendance rates

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

**These are 2014 figures
and there has been
steady year on year
improvement for all
three rates since 2012**



Improved Year 12 completion

The Smith Family's advancement rate



63.2%

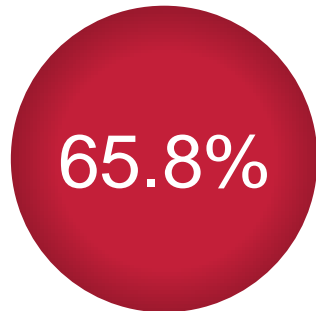
Learning for Life students who were in Year 10 in 2012 and advanced to Year 12 or its equivalent by 2014 while still on the program.
Up from 60% for the period 2010–12.



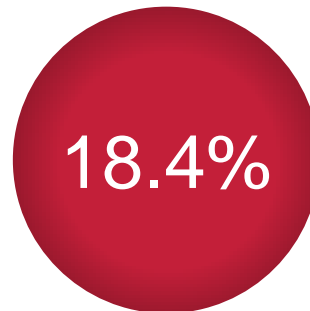
This is a longitudinal measure, not an apparent measure like much of the available educational data

Successful post school transitions

Fully engaged



Partly engaged



84.2% of former LfL students are engaged in work and/or study 12 months after leaving the program

Learning for Life students in work or study 12 months after leaving the program. This is of students who left the program in Years 10, 11 or 12. Of the 15.8% who were not engaged, 80% were actively seeking employment and one in 6 was volunteering.

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



Some of what we are learning

- Challenges include: developing useful outcome measures that can be tracked over time, joys of Federation, lack of nationally comparable data, using admin data for research and practice, supporting staff to collect data, reflect on and change practice, lack of national clearinghouse
- Enormous opportunity to use nationally unique dataset to help inform policy and practice – especially if used longitudinally
- Many families and young people happy to participate in research – recent survey of 6,000
- Staff want to make a difference to young people
- Small number of outcomes embedded in 5 year strategic plan, giving staff data back, regular communication and cross organisational engagement critical

Some of what are we learning

- Year on year improvements in educational outcomes occurring at aggregate level & for individual students ➔ Family background ≠ destiny
- Long-term parental engagement in children's learning is possible in disadvantaged families – respectful reciprocal relationships, scholarship not welfare, different offerings at different stages, long-term support
- 'Best' attendance and engagement rates not related to parents' education
- Year 12 and Yr 12 equivalent do not lead to same post-school outcomes for disadvantaged young people (cf NCVET)
- Leaving school at the end of Yr 10 and Yr 11 can lead to different post-school engagement rates
- Some key opportunities for additional support eg Yr 6 to Yrs 7 & 8 re attendance, Yrs 10 to 12 re post school engagement

Conclusion

- Clear relationship between education and social and economic outcomes
- Many disadvantaged children and young people at risk of poor outcomes
- Young people are entitled to achieve educationally
- Improvements are possible
- Need stronger focus on partnerships with families, schools, governments, non-government organisations, researchers, business and philanthropy, to break cycle of disadvantage
- Need stronger policy focus on building and sharing the evidence base on what works to improve disadvantaged young people's outcomes



Anne.Hampshire@thesmithfamily.com.au
www.thesmithfamily.com.au