

Question on Notice
No. 1551
Asked on 29 October 2008

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford)

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QUESTION:

With reference to the Government's "Every Day Counts" initiative for reducing school absenteeism

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- (1) Does Education Queensland have a process for recording how many students in public schools have skipped classes and subsequently been reported by members of the public?
- (2) If so, how many secondary school students in the Darling Downs and Toowoomba Districts have been reported by members of the community for failing to attend classes for the current year to date?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Cunningham for raising this question. My department takes very seriously the importance of students attending school each day. To this end, I recently launched the *Every Day Counts* initiative.

Every Day Counts is a statewide initiative addressing the issue of student attendance at school. The initiative is designed to change parent, community and student attitudes to school attendance. It requires the support of both parents and the community if student attendance is to be successfully addressed.

The majority of students do attend school consistently, but there is a small percentage of students who are absent for extended periods without good reason – and this is totally unacceptable.

My Department's research shows that there is a clear relationship between attendance at school and student achievement, such as in the national literacy and numeracy tests.

Higher rates of attendance at school mean higher levels of achievement and as attendance drops off, so does the rate of achievement.

Schools will play a vital role in this campaign by monitoring attendance, identifying those students with attendance problems and managing this by the use of early intervention strategies.

However, the role of the community in supporting student attendance is strongly recognised in the *Every Day Counts* initiative. Reporting student absences has, and continues to be, an important role for community members.

When a community member advises a school or district or regional office that a school student is not at school, the matter is investigated by the school and action is taken if there is not an acceptable reason. There is no central reporting of these matters.

While there is no 'quick-fix' to chronic absenteeism, a partnership between schools, parents and the local community has proven effective in reducing absenteeism and improving school attendance.