
State student turnout fails to make the grade

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A RADICAL school trial spearheaded by Noel Pearson 's Cape York Partnerships in Aurukun had one of Queensland's worst student attendance rates in the state system last year.

School-by-school attendance figures obtained by The Courier-Mail through the Right to Information process show state schools with large indigenous populations continue to be the worst attended.

A number of schools in Brisbane's outskirts have also performed poorly, including Deception Bay, Glenala and Ipswich state high schools.

The outskirts of Brisbane also produced some of the biggest improvementst year, including Mabel Park and Loganlea state high schools.

While statewide attendance rose 0.3 per cent to 91 per cent in 2010, the figure is still below the 2008 rate, when former education minister Rod Welford said the State Government had to increase attendance from 92 per cent.

Current Education Minister Geoff Wilson did not respond to questions about how much had been spent on attendance initiatives since the Every Day Counts campaign launched in 2008, but said schools were working hard to improve outcomes.

Figures from Education Queensland show the Aurukun campus of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy (CYAAA), had the worst attendance rate (62.1 per cent) of any school or campus with more than 50 students, but better than the previous year's 60 per cent.

Its other campus at Coen had a 93.3 per cent 2010 student attendance rate, 1.6 per cent lower than the previous year.

At the CYAAA students are taught via a method called direct instruction.

A spokeswoman said the Aurukun campus had since adopted a new school attendance policy resulting in an improved attendance to 64.8 per cent during term four, 2010.

EQ assistant director-general Jeff Hunt said it was unfair to compare school attendance in remote communities with urban areas.

“Schools in far north Queensland are annually impacted by severe weather events and in recent years have also been impacted by swine flu. Factors such as these combined with cultural considerations make it unfair to pass judgment,” he said.

He said initiatives improving attendance included breakfast and before school programs.

However, Mr Wilson, Mr Hunt and principal associations this week said parents had to help to lift attendance rates with the support of schools.

Worst 2010 attendance rates

STATE SCHOOLS/CAMPUS*

1. Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy - Aurukun school/campus: 62.1%
2. Bwgcolman Community School: 64.4%
3. Doomadgee State School: 68.4%
4. Yarrabah State School: 74.2%
5. Tagai State College Darnley Island campus 74.4%
6. Cunnamulla State School: 74.7%
7. Normanton State School: 74.8%
8. Northern Peninsula Area State College: 75.6%
9. Mornington Island State School: 76.1%
10. Lockhart State School: 76.9%

*Figures are for semester one and only schools or campuses with more than 50 students have been included - *Source: Education Queensland*