

Francis Greenway High School

Attendance matters initiative

In Term Four last year, Stage 4 and 5 students at Francis Greenway High School discussed the importance of attendance and established links between attendance data and successful outcomes later in life. After completing the Student Voices Poll on “Why Attendance Matters”, students were encouraged to create individual designs which discussed some of the things they felt mattered to school age students, in regards to attendance.

Students used their prior knowledge of Adobe Creative software and graphic design elements to create digital posters depicting attendance statistics, whilst others used their artmaking capabilities in various forms to construct designs focusing on composition and a short, clear message. Some students created flyers with information specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, while others used their persuasive writing skills to write newspaper style articles and online journal entries.

All students had to submit proposals depicting their understanding of and research on attendance, with many considering their own experiences at school as well as the social and cultural impact of poor attendance at school.

We spoke to seven students who participated in the project and this is what they had to say:

What did you do that assisted you when creating this project?

Riley: Firstly we began by completing the student poll on “*Why Attendance Matters.*” We then discussed as a class the importance of attendance and general statistics on attendance in our school. Some of us looked at National and State statistics of student attendance in departmental schools, while others researched previous poster campaigns. We agreed that previous poster campaigns had been designed for students but very few had been created by students.

How did you develop your ideas?

Emily: After we looked at poster designs, we began to develop our draft proposals in class. Working in pairs, we were able to bounce ideas off each other and this allowed us to create designs that discussed the importance of attendance, in a range of ways.

Our ideas were developed through incorporating elements from previous designs that we felt were successful and that related to school age students like us. In the end we chose designs that clearly addressed the benefits associated with high attendance, as we felt this had a greater impact on students' overall understanding.

What does your final design convey or discuss?

Sophie: All of our messages are different and we hope that they are received well. For some of us, we discuss the importance of attending school, whilst others list statistics about poor attendance for shock value. Some discuss attendance specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and others list the benefits of attending school regularly. We all agreed that attendance needs to be greater, and one way that this can be achieved is through engagement of students in the classroom. It is especially important to attend school in order to reach your full potential and to build upon the diverse skills that school teaches you.

Why did you choose to focus on a particular aspect of attendance?

Chloe: We all choose our designs for different reasons. I chose a design which showcased the lifelong effects of missing school. This was demonstrated through depicting statistics, as I believed that this was more confronting and showed the importance of attending school in a clear and visible manner. Others chose designs which they felt would appeal more to a target audience.

What was something that surprised you when learning about attendance?

Jazmin: We were really surprised to hear that attendance is a growing problem. When our teacher first showed us attendance statistics we couldn't believe that it could have such a big impact on a young person's life. It all adds up very quickly, and if you are away only one day a week or fortnight, you are missing out on so much and sometimes you don't even realise. The thing that I found most surprising was that attendance changes between year groups. It was really interesting to see statistics in relation to how many students don't attend school on a regular basis.

Are you happy with your overall design?

Leilani: Yes, I feel like it conveys the message that attendance is important, it appeals to the student body and is relevant for my age group. Sometimes posters can be a bit hit and miss, especially those created for a target audience, but our posters explore themes that are relevant to us and other school age students. My particular design reflects my culture and it is something that I am proud to showcase. We are all very happy with our designs as they reflect us as individuals and demonstrate our capabilities as contemporary artists.

Do you think attendance matters?

All: Absolutely, our personal experiences at school shape who we are as young adults and as future members of society.

- Commitment to attendance is key; if you don't come to school how can you show that you are truly committed to anything.
- School is a practice run for the real world, it sets you up for future career success.
- School prepares you for the workforce and creates a sense of normalcy and routine. It also gives you a chance to socialise and be with your peers.
- Come to school. You are given opportunities to expand upon your prior knowledge and learning capabilities, with school fostering a lifelong desire to learn. Not only that but you develop friendships and bonds that will last a lifetime.
- School allows me to escape my hectic home life and I've made some really good friends and connections through school, not just with peers but teachers as well.

Students involved in this discussion:

Jazmin, Chloe, Evan, Sophie, Emily, Leilani, Riley.