

Cobram Secondary College Re engagement & Applied Learning

Cobram Secondary College is rural school 260km from Melbourne, situated on the northern Victorian border on the banks of the picturesque Murray River, The Cobram township's population is approximately 6000.

Cobram Secondary College is a learning community of staff and students. The school makes the most of the advantages of its small size and location and provides a rigorous, well balanced education enabling all students to learn, grow, succeed and lead. The student population of 454 creates an intimate environment that allows the development of strong community culture and relationships. Teachers are members of the local community, ensuring a supportive and caring college where every student matters, every staff member cares and every opportunity is taken.

Cobram Secondary students have a breadth and depth of learning pathways in the junior and senior years of schooling. Small class sizes allow the development of personalised learning. A dedicated staff and diverse range of subjects based on student choice promotes a culture of excellence.

Like the majority of rural schools across the state, professional services, flexible learning options and alternative settings that many regional and city schools take for granted to support their student that struggle with mainstream settings is non-existent for schools like Cobram Secondary College.

Programs/Alternative settings like Flexible Learning, Berry Street School and McAuley Champagnat Programme (MCP) are based in regional centers. In Cobram's case, this is Shepparton which is 50 minutes travel each way with no public transport options. These barriers put the access to these programs out of reach to the students and families that need these the most. These programs are also at capacity and have long waiting lists which just adds another barrier.

These barriers put rural students who require these supports to stay in education, gain employability skills or improve literacy and numeracy skills at severe disadvantage when our goal as educators is to provide students with every opportunity to succeed and leave school with skills to be able to gain meaningful employment or go onto further study.

Cobram Secondary College's manta is:

- Every student matters
- Every opportunity taken
- Every staff member cares
- Every student succeeds

To combat these barriers and allow the college to meet this mantra and best provide educational opportunities to some disengaged students, the college come up with two impressive programs. These are Reengagement (REG) and Applied Learning which have been implemented into the college program in 2023.

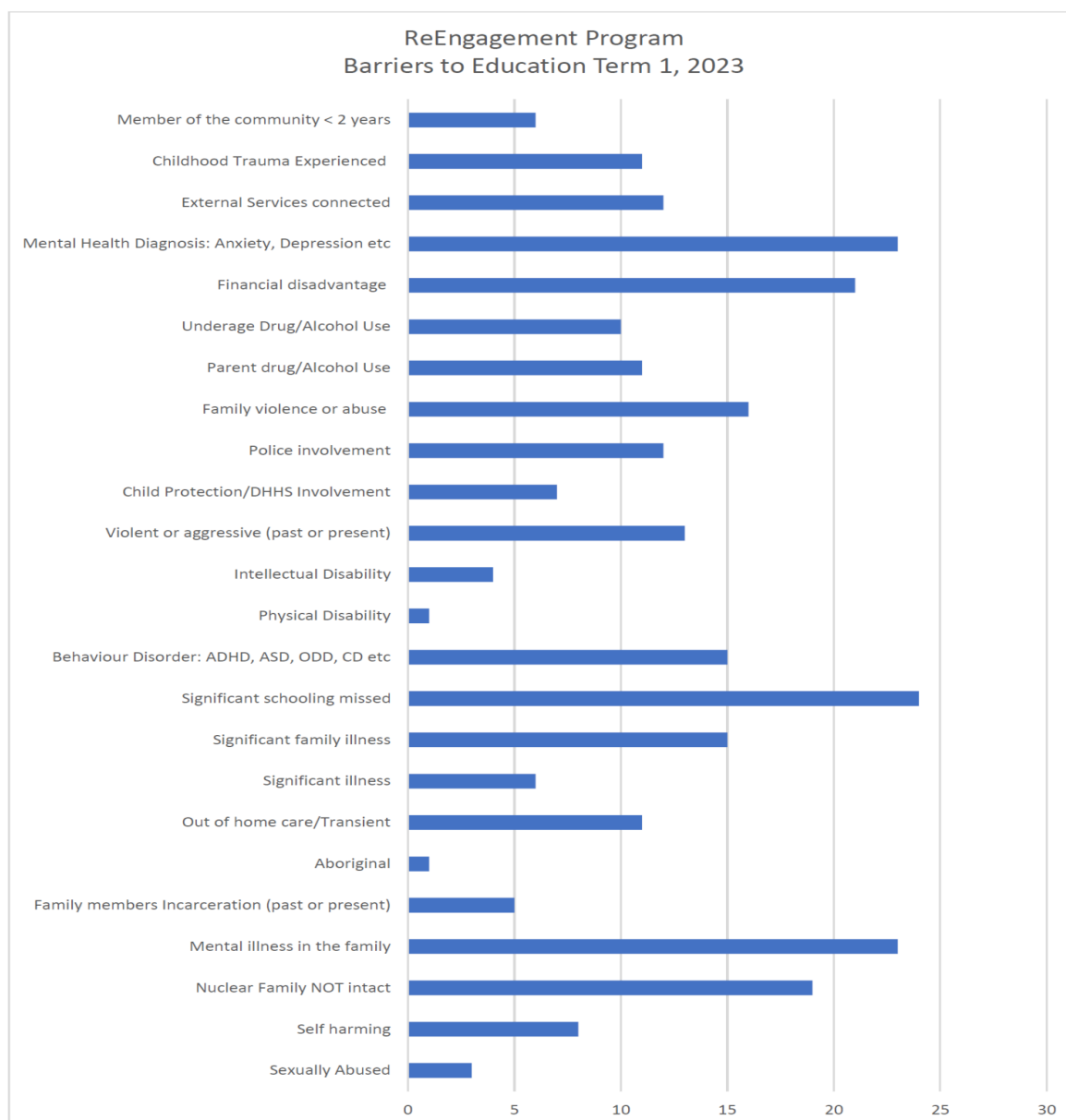
Enclosed is a description of both programs in action, data & feedback from staff students and parents.

Cobram Secondary College Re-engagement program

The Cobram Secondary College Reengagement program has been designed to support young people who have disengaged from education for an extended period of time or whose behaviour in class is incompatible with learning. Students referred into the program are provided the opportunity to engage in literacy and numeracy curriculum, with work based at their academic level as well as provides them the life skills to be active members of the community. The Reengagement program connects the young person with an allocated Education Coach; students then work one-on-one with that Coach throughout their Reengagement journey. Within the program each student will have an Individual Education Plan developed to address their specific learning needs, social/emotional and future aspiration goals.

Cobram students identified for the REG have low attendance (30% of less), enrol with complex needs or have significant wellbeing issues that affect behaviour, attendance or engagement.

The following Table outlines the Summary of Barriers to Education for students in 2023



Program Goals

Reengagement aims to support a young person to

- re-engage a young person with education
- to facilitate and support the transition to an educational pathway.

The programs Coaches work with the young person to develop an individualised plan to an educational pathway that is tailored to meet their specific needs.

Engagement

The Reengagement process will vary between individuals. The Reengagement Coach will monitor how the young person is progressing and will assess if they are ready to move through the transition process. The Coach will use a diversity of skill sets of a teacher, task organiser/facilitator, mentor and life skills provider to ensure the student needs are met and opportunities are provided to work towards their goals.

Initial Steps

Students referred to the Reengagement program will attend an Intake Meeting with the program coordinator and a parent/guardian where possible or a mentor. Within the intake meeting information is gathered relating to the challenges and experiences of the student in a school setting. Short and long term educational goals are also explored.

Session Frequency: Minimum One Reengagement Session per week.

Session Length: Sessions are 45mins – 1.5 Hours in duration.

Session Locations: Reengagement sessions can occur in indoor/outdoor learning environments

If the students' situation requires it - the student will have a meeting with a member of the wellbeing team to ensure a holistic approach is taken to the needs of the student as a learner and member of the community. Wellbeing Team will contact the student following the meeting to recommend the number of sessions they attend with a Wellbeing person in addition to the Reengagement program

- *Session Frequency:* To be decided by wellbeing worker.
- *Session Length:* Sessions are 45 mins in duration.
- *Session Locations:* Wellbeing sessions can occur both onsite at school

Following these meetings, students will have their mainstream timetables cleared of classes and will move onto the Reengagement rolls; this will be reflected on Compass.

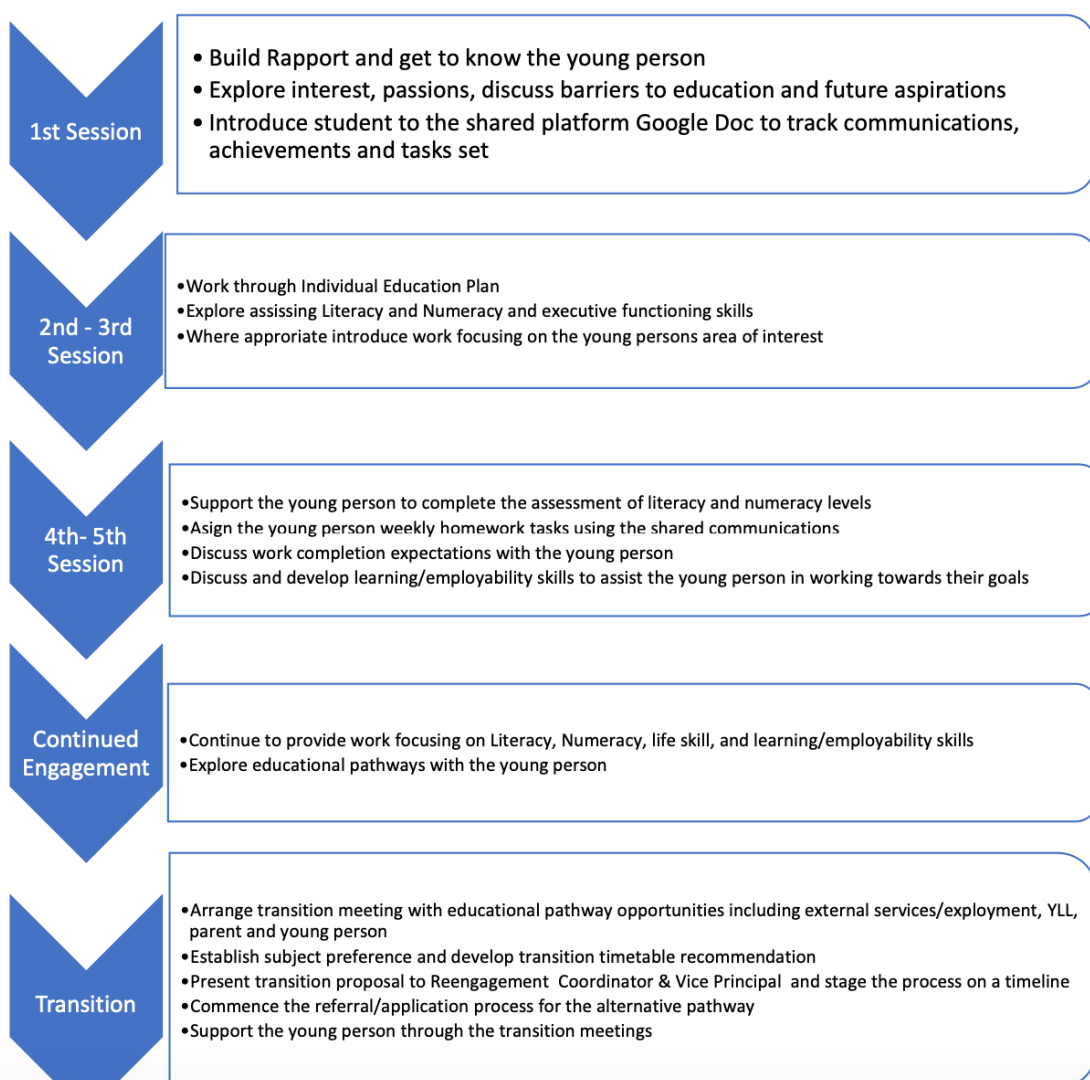
Current observations (July 2023)

- Students working on literacy and numeracy tasks
- Students having choice in their learning
- Positive relationships between the students and the coach
- Students attending Reg on a regular basis
- Well-resourced learning area with a variety of learning tasks, books and other activities to use with students.
- mid-year data that showed student success stories who have moved from Reg back to normal fulltime classes.
- Data (Appendix 1: Reengagement program Parent and support people Survey data.) showed families of REG students happy with the program and the affect on education the program is having for their young person.

Student reflections:

- "If I did not go to REG I would still be at home and not coming to school."
- "REG provided a safe place to fit into a new school after lots of issues at my old school"
- "the REG teacher is my safe person at school"
- "REG has allowed me to build my English and Maths Skills"
- "I like to pat the school dog in REG, it makes me happy"

Session Structure



Cobram Secondary College Applied Learning Program

Cobram Secondary College offers students in year 8, 9 and 10 an applied Learning Program. Classes are structured as a straight year 8 class and a combined 9/10 class. The program is opt-in and students do the opportunity to stay in the program or use it as a way to transition back into a traditional school setting.

This program is made up of real world Literacy and Numeracy skill building related to the Victorian Curriculum as well as hands on activities like Community Projects, Pedal Program, Life skills, Work skills and Sport. Classes are capped at 20 students and staff are selected based on their skills and abilities to work with students who require additional needs.

The program has its own space, and each class also has an Education Support member in the class to assist students. I was lucky to observe this fantastic program in action and see students who generally have low regard for school or experience limited success at school succeed in this unique learning space.

Cobram Secondary College's definition of Applied learning is that:

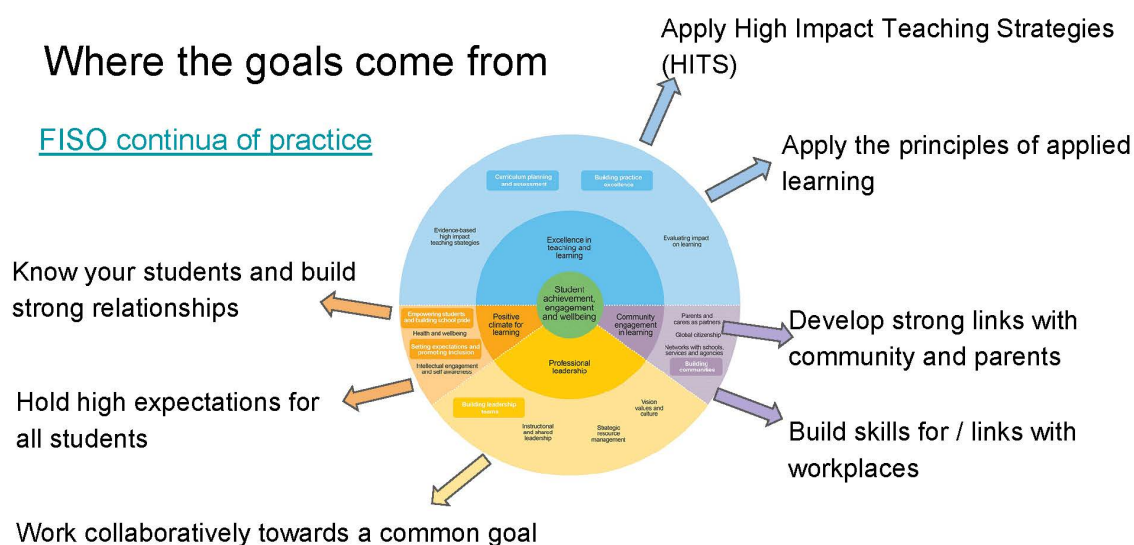
"Applied learning is about nurturing and working with a student in a holistic manner, which takes into account their personal strengths, interests, goals and previous experiences.

Applied learning sees students use knowledge and skills to solve real world problems. Students who engage in applied learning can demonstrate mastery of skills in new ways and gain practical application of new skills and knowledge.

Applied learning can be integrated into existing subjects, extra-curricular activities, and involves engaging in meaningful and authentic experiences, both in and outside of the classroom, that will translate into later life."

Why an Applied Learning Program?

Cobram Secondary staff identified a need to cater for students who were not learning or disengaged from school and misbehaving while in classes. The College applied the FISO model in the planning stages of the applied program.



The benefits of the Applied Learning Program include:

- Improving student motivation, engagement and commitment
- Improving student self-esteem and confidence
- Providing a context for learning generic skills that are valued in the workplace, for example: problem solving
- working effectively with others and in teams
- leadership and personal responsibility
- Catering effectively for students with different preferred learning styles
- Provide an opportunity to build strong relationships within the school context.
- Allow students to re-engage with learning through the lens of projects with learning targeted at individual student needs.
- Develop character qualities and core competencies which will support individuals to flourish in life and in the workplace.
- Provide opportunities to connect with the local community while actively participating in projects as an act of service.
- Support students in identifying career pathways.
- Providing a meaningful context for learning both theoretical concepts and practical skills.

Student Comments

I observed students in VET Employment, Pedal Program, Numeracy and Literacy while on placement at Cobram Secondary College. Students were engaged in their learning, working well in small groups and generally happy to be in class. I asked a number of students to tell me about Applied and this is what they said:

"If applied is cut, I'm not coming to school anymore"

"I like hands on activities it better than being in a year 10 English class"

"I don't get into a much trouble as I used to."

"I like Pedal Program and the farm, I'm learning stuff that is useful"

"this teacher cares about me and wants to help me"

"I can see how this task will help me when I get a job"

Linking Cobram Secondary College students to the community

- Community tree planting
- Pedal program: Retore old bikes and donate to community groups, those in need or to the Soloman Islands.
- Industry visits
- Indigenous Mural painting
- School maintenance
- Community Veggie Garden
- Community Recycling Program

These programs provide another link between the school and the local Cobram Community and provide opportunities for students to make positive contributions to their local community which some may not otherwise get the chance to.

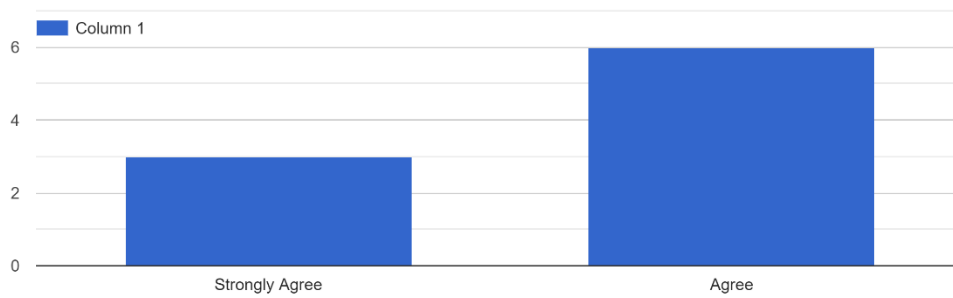
Appendix 1: Reengagement program Parent and support people Survey data.

Re-Engagement Program – 2023 Parent and Support people Survey

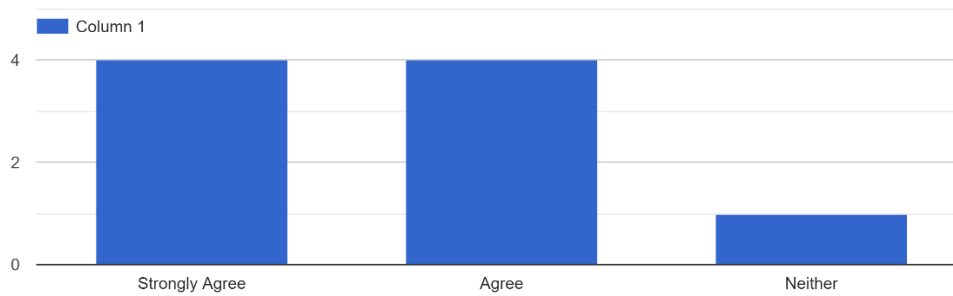
Survey Conducted by XXXX

9 Responses

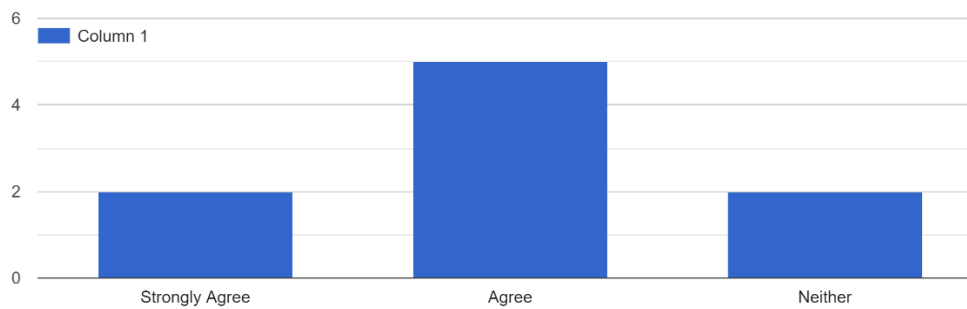
1. I have seen an improvement in my child's attitude since starting the re-engagement program.



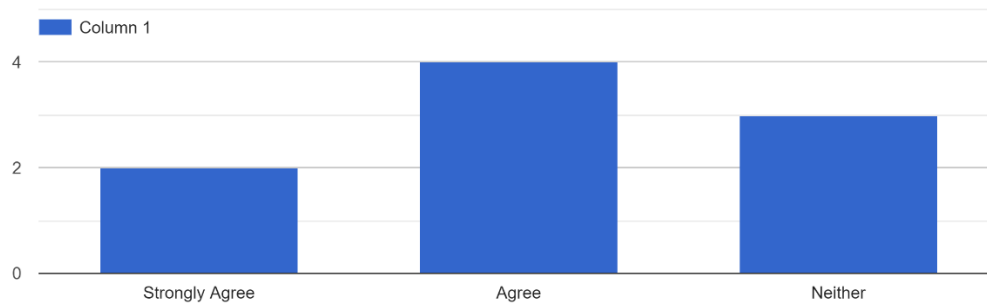
2. The flexibility in the content has helped reconnect my child with school



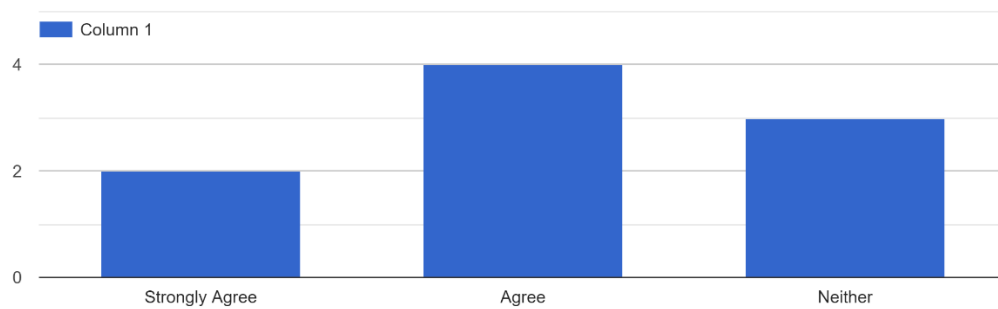
3. My child is now happy to come to school



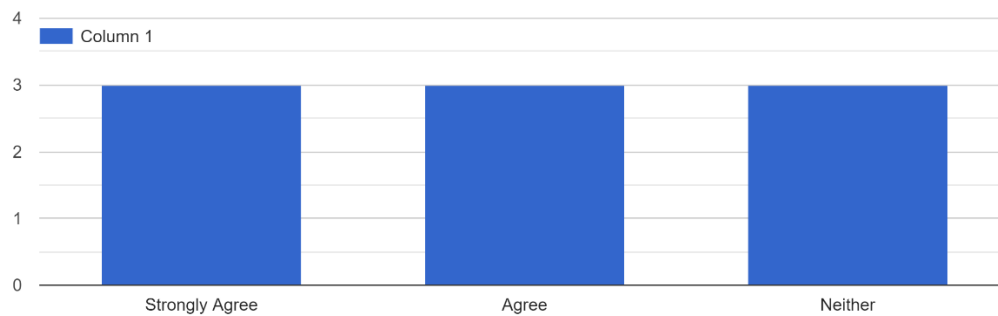
4. I don't have to argue with my child to get to school every day



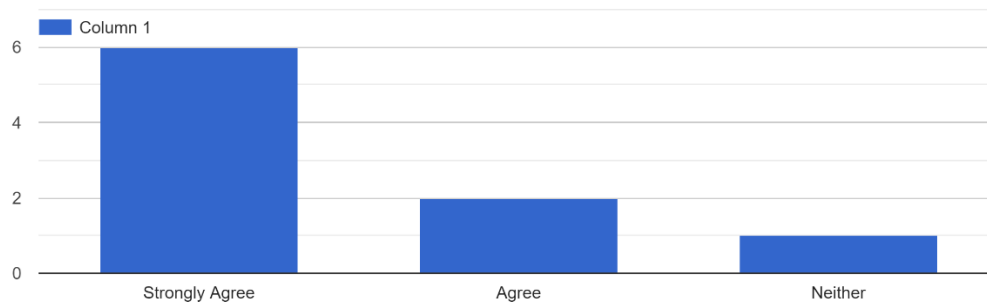
5. I have seen an improvement in my child's education since starting the re-engagement program.



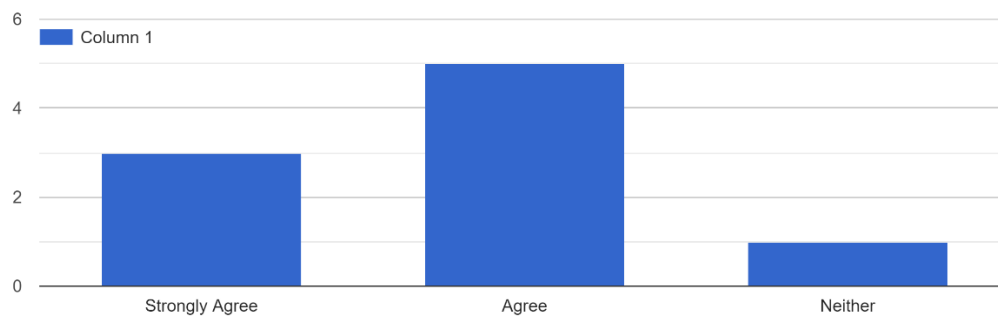
6. I believe the educational content my child receives is relevant.



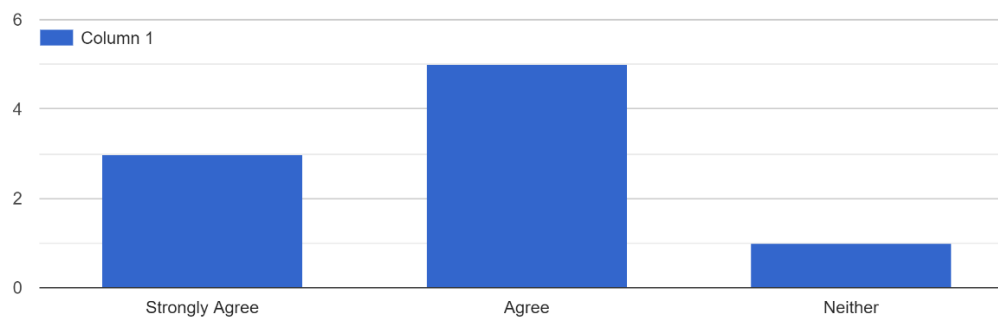
7. The flexibility of the timetable has helped meet my child's needs



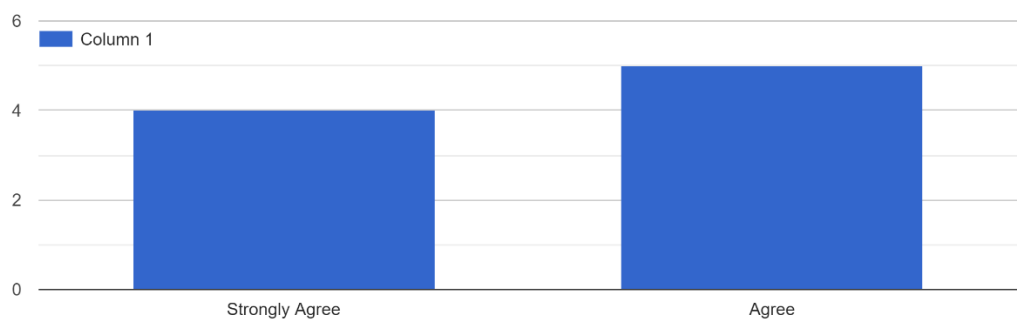
8. I believe this program has positively impacted my child outside of school.



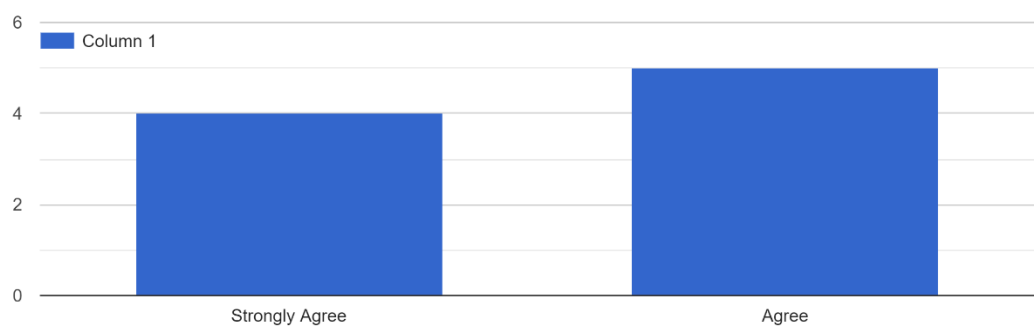
9. I believe the program has positively impacted by child's social and emotional development.



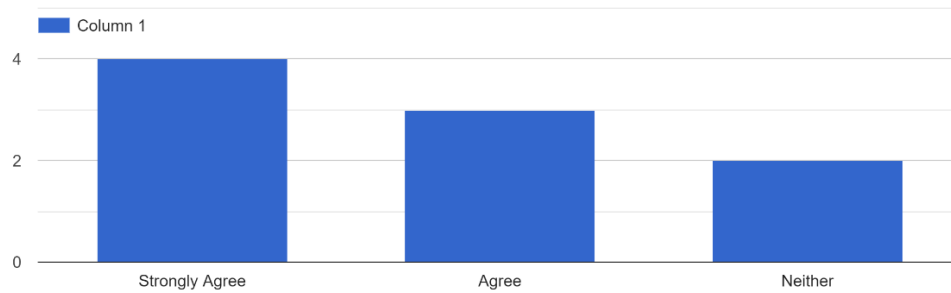
10. I believe my child is benefiting from the current Cobram Secondary College well-being services.



11. I have received the right amount of communication regarding my child throughout the program.

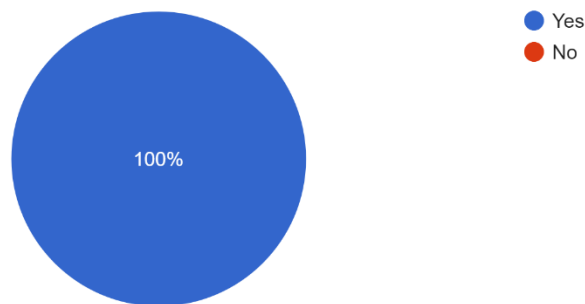


12. I feel supported as a parent in meeting my child's needs



13. Are you satisfied with your child's current timetable?

9 responses



If No - Please elaborate on the changes you would like to see.

2 responses

XXXX has been empowered to participate in the design of XXXX timetable. I feel that allowing this ownership is more likely to create an environment in which XXXX feels inspired to attend Yes, but will need to look at expanding when ready

14. Is there anything you believe we could improve on?

2 responses

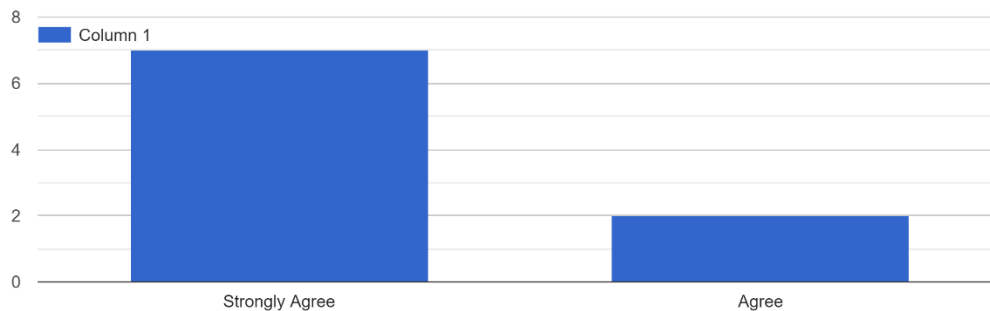
I think the program is great for the kids.
Clearer communication with services around concerns, absences, changes in timetables etc.

15. Is there anything you would like to see additionally within the program?

1 response

I can't think of anything.

16. How satisfied have you been with the re-engagement program?



17. Can you please provide one reason as to why this Program should continue?9

responses

I believe XXXX is not ready for full time study with other students XXXX feel more comfortable with only a few students at this time.

Help encourage children to get at least the minimum required education until they are old enough to venture different avenues.

As a Reconnect Caseworker I work closely with several schools around disengagement and re-engagement of young people into the education system. This program is the most person centered, flexible, trauma informed and effective program I have witnessed. XXXX felt empowered in the process. Anything less would have made her extremely unlikely to re-engage into education

It has helped my child to be re-engaged with school aswell as helping XXXX with XXXX anxiety Without it, my son would not go to school at all. I moved his school for this program

The program gives students the opportunity to learn more from their experiences.

It supports young people in Cobram to receive additional support that otherwise would not be offered. Cobram is short of options and services for young people and this is invaluable for young people who are disengaged from education and need additional support.

It is an incredible opportunity for Children to re-engage in school without the pressures of returning straight to the classroom. It enables them the ability to work on their confidence first, beating their anxieties, and building strong and reciprocal relationships with Teachers and the wellbeing team prior to re-integrating back into the classroom with their peers.

Allowing disengaged students the ability to engage in a way that is comfortable to them allows them to reconnect to school on their terms.