

SCHOOL EDUCATION

School performance has remained stable, whilst improvements have been made in student retention and with the number of students achieving the HSC.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

IS HIGHER in primary school than in

94.0%

91.2%

Primary School Secondary School

SECONDARY SCHOOL*

*All students, 2015

MORE STUDENTS ARE ACHIEVING THE HSC



INCLUDING DISADVANTAGED
STUDENTS

*Up from 63,564 to 68,062

Compared to 2009 fewer
NSW STUDENTS ARE ACHIEVING
IN THE TOP TWO NAPLAN BANDS

2009

2015

FOR READING
AND NUMERACY

RETENTION RATES HAVE IMPROVED FOR

70.5%
RETENTION
2006



78.2%
RETENTION
2015

ALL HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS

3. School education

Having a strong and sustainable schooling system ensures that all children and young people receive quality education – resulting in better work and life opportunities for individuals, and leading to broader improvements across communities and the wider economy. Education is primarily the responsibility of the states and territories, and as with most other jurisdictions across Australia, schools within NSW fall in one of three sectors: government; Catholic; independent.

It is a requirement for all children in NSW to be enrolled in school or receiving home schooling by their sixth birthday, and for students to participate in school (or approved education or training, or full-time work) until at least 17 years of age. Varying from state to state, traditional schooling in NSW consists of seven scholastic years throughout primary school, starting from Kindergarten to Year 6, followed by secondary school from Years 7 to 12.

School attendance

Why is it important?

Research shows that regular school attendance has a significant influence on educational outcomes, positive peer relationships and the basic social skills essential for later-life success (Zubrick et al., 2013). Conversely, absent children are at greater risk of poorer academic performance and leaving secondary school early - increasing their risk of unemployment and welfare dependency (Daraganova, 2012). School attendance is a priority among educational policymakers, with evidence suggesting that improved attendance, especially among disadvantaged groups, can improve educational outcomes (Biddle, 2014).

The student attendance rate is the number of student days attended by full-time students in Years 1 to 10, as a percentage of the total number of possible student attendance days over the same period.

What does the data tell us?

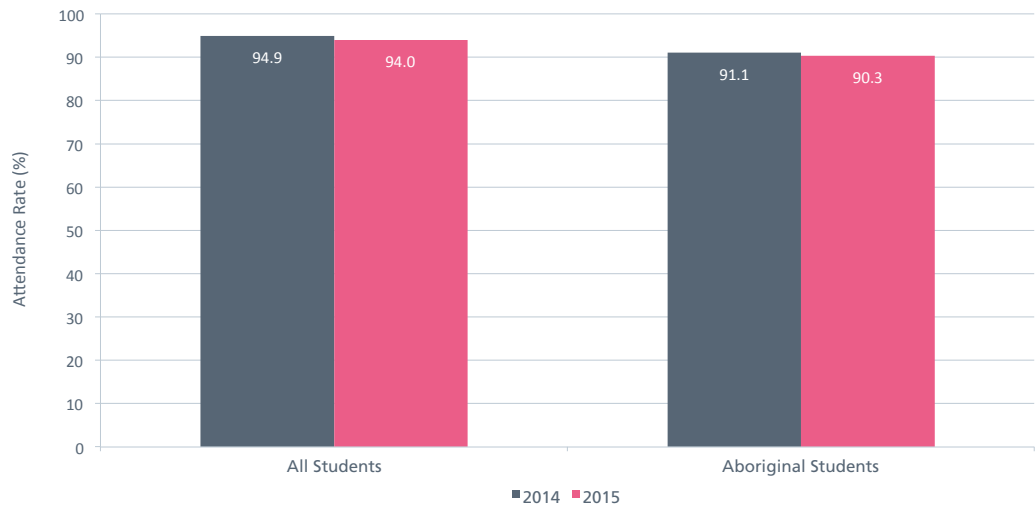
School attendance rates declined slightly between 2014 and 2015, which is due in part to changes in the way extended family holidays are recorded¹⁸. Attendance rates are consistently higher in primary school than in secondary school – a pattern observed in all states across Australia, and among all student equity groups. The disparities in attendance rates between Aboriginal and all students are evident in primary school, with the gap widening during secondary school years.

¹⁸ From 2015 holidays are now counted as absences, whereas previously students could apply for exemption from attendance.

Figure 3.1:

Student attendance rate for all students and Aboriginal students, Years 1-6, NSW, 2014-15

Source: Report on Government Services 2016, vol. B School education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 4A.133 and 4A.136

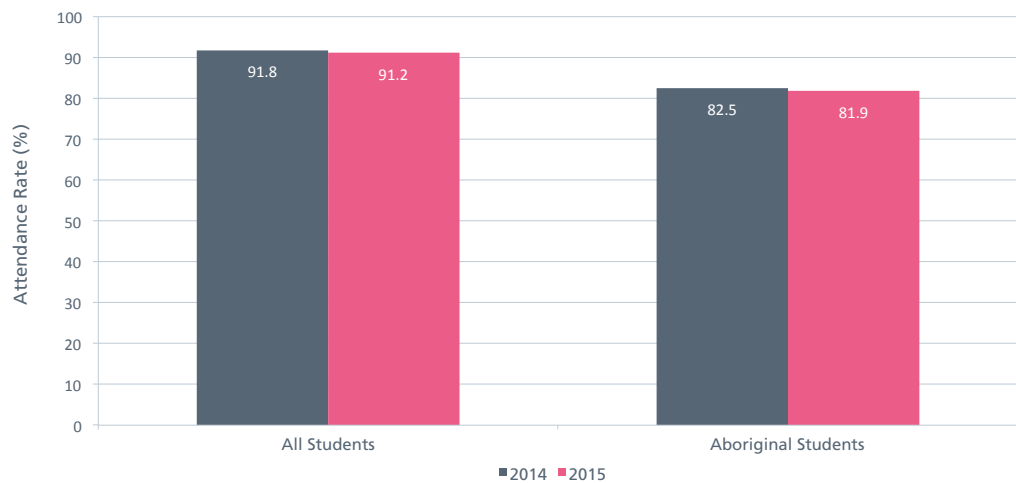


Attendance rates decline steadily throughout junior secondary years and are the lowest in Year 10. In 2015, the attendance rate for all students in Year 10 fell to below 90.0 per cent whilst attendance by Year 10 Aboriginal students was 76.2 per cent (data not shown).

Figure 3.2:

Student attendance rate for all students and Aboriginal students, Years 7-10, NSW, 2014-15

Source: Report on Government Services 2016, vol. B School education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 4A.133 and 4A.136



Note: National standards for student attendance reporting were introduced in 2014, resulting in improved comparability between sectors. As a result, only two years of data are available for this report.

When analysed by geographical location, attendance rates decline as remoteness increases, especially for secondary school students.

Figure 3.3:

Student attendance rate for all students by remoteness, Years 1-6, NSW, 2014-15

Source: Report on Government Services 2016, vol. B School education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 4A.133 and 4A.136

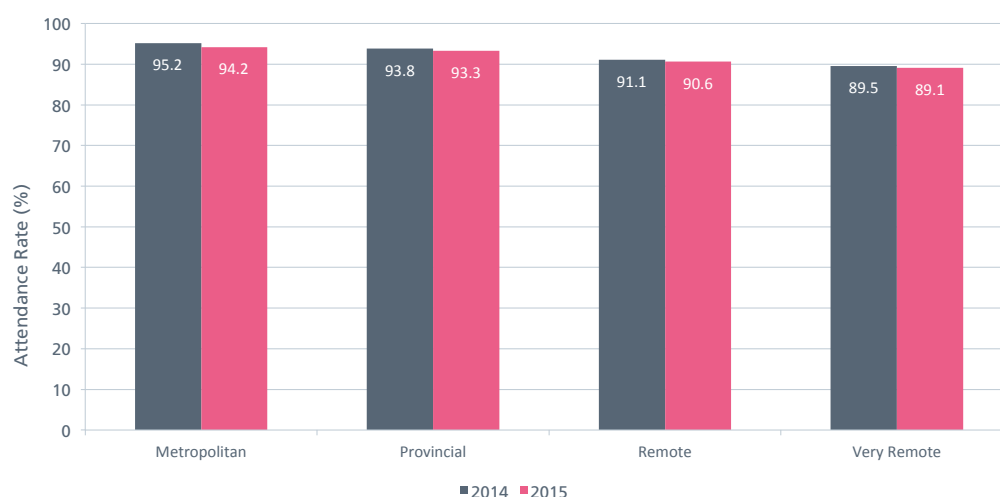
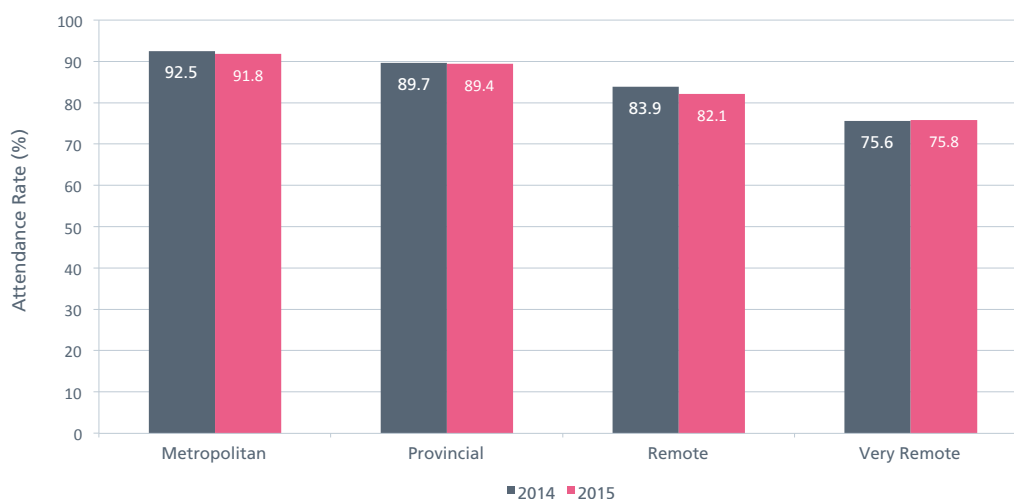


Figure 3.4:

Student attendance rate for all students by remoteness, Years 7-10, NSW, 2014-15

Source: Report on Government Services 2016, vol. B School education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 4A.133 and 4A.136



Note: National standards for student attendance reporting were introduced in 2014, resulting in improved comparability between sectors. As a result, only two years of data are available for this report.

Caution is advised when interpreting results for students in remote and very remote areas. Small cohort sizes can lead to greater volatility in data and are not necessarily reflective of real changes.

NAPLAN outcomes – performance in the top two bands

Why is it important?

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment of Australian students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It tests the core skills essential for every child to progress through school and life, and comprises of five separate domains: reading, writing, grammar and punctuation, spelling and numeracy. NAPLAN results are reported along a national achievement scale, and are divided into ten bands. Six bands are used for reporting at each year level, however, not all bands are reported for each year group. The higher the band, the increasingly complex knowledge and skills demonstrated by students.

The best indicator of success in life after school, including employment, higher salaries and good health, is a student's literacy and numeracy skills (OECD, 2015a). Improving students' literacy and numeracy are important for lifelong learning, and help lead to productive and rewarding participation in the community. Accordingly, one of the Premier's Priorities for NSW is to increase the proportion of students performing in the top two bands for literacy and numeracy¹⁹. Whilst improving overall literacy and numeracy outcomes, it is also important to monitor the performance of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with particular focus on 'closing the gap' in achievement between Aboriginal students and all students²⁰.

19 NSW State Priorities: Making it Happen – Improving Education Results.
20 COAG: Closing the gap in Indigenous Disadvantage.

What does the data tell us?

There has been a decline in the proportion of students achieving in the top 2 NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy from 2009 to 2015, with the exception of Year 3 reading. Considerable effort will be needed to address this if the Premier's Priority target of an eight per cent increase by 2020 is to be achieved.

Trends for each assessment presented in the figures in the following Table 1.1.

Table 1.1:

Change in percentage of students achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy between 2009 and 2015, NSW

Source: Derived from ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy

Change in the percentage of all students – top two bands (2009-2015)		
	Reading	Numeracy
Year 3	+ 2.8 percentage points	– 2.8 percentage points
Year 5	– 2.8 percentage points	– 2.2 percentage points*
Year 7	– 0.8 percentage points	– 3.0 percentage points
Year 9	– 1.3 percentage points	– 2.3 percentage points

Change in the percentage of Aboriginal students – top two bands (2009-2015)		
	Reading	Numeracy
Year 3	+ 1.4 percentage points	– 1.5 percentage points
Year 5	– 1.0 percentage points	– 1.1 percentage points
Year 7	– 0.1 percentage points	– 1.2 percentage points
Year 9	– 1.1 percentage points	– 0.8 percentage points

Change in percentage of low SES students – top two bands (2010-2015)		
	Reading	Numeracy
Year 3	– 0.7 percentage points	– 3.5 percentage points
Year 5	– 1.4 percentage points	– 3.1 percentage points*
Year 7	– 2.4 percentage points	– 2.9 percentage points*
Year 9	– 0.2 percentage points	– 1.8 percentage points

Note: * indicated trend from 2009 to 2015 is significantly different from zero at a 5% level of significance.

The proxy measure for low SES is parental occupation Category 4 (machine operators, hospitality staff, assistants, labourers), with NAPLAN results by parental occupation first made available in 2010. Parental occupation is self-reported and not a perfect proxy for low SES, meaning that results should be interpreted with caution.

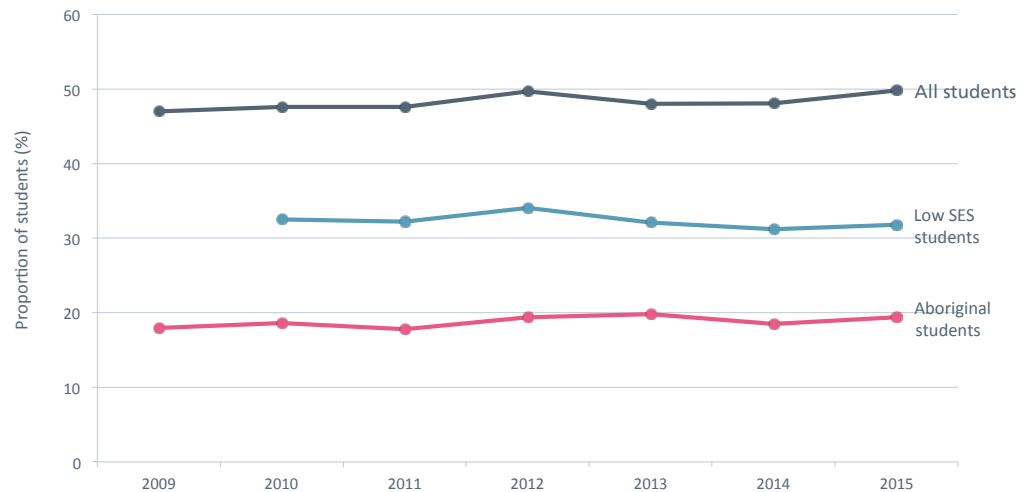
Small cohort sizes can lead to greater year-on-year variability in NAPLAN results. This variability should be taken into consideration, especially when interpreting NAPLAN results for Aboriginal students in NSW.

The proportion of all Year 3 students achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading has increased by 2.8 percentage points since 2009, rising to 49.8 per cent in 2015. Despite Aboriginal students also improving on this measure (increasing from 18.0 per cent in 2009 to 19.4 per cent in 2015), the gap between all students and Aboriginal students has widened by 1.4 percentage points. The proportion of low SES students in the top two bands for reading fell from 32.5 per cent in 2010 to 31.8 per cent in 2015. These trends are not significant ($p > .05$)²¹.

Figure 3.5:

Proportion of Year 3 students in the top two NAPLAN reading bands, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

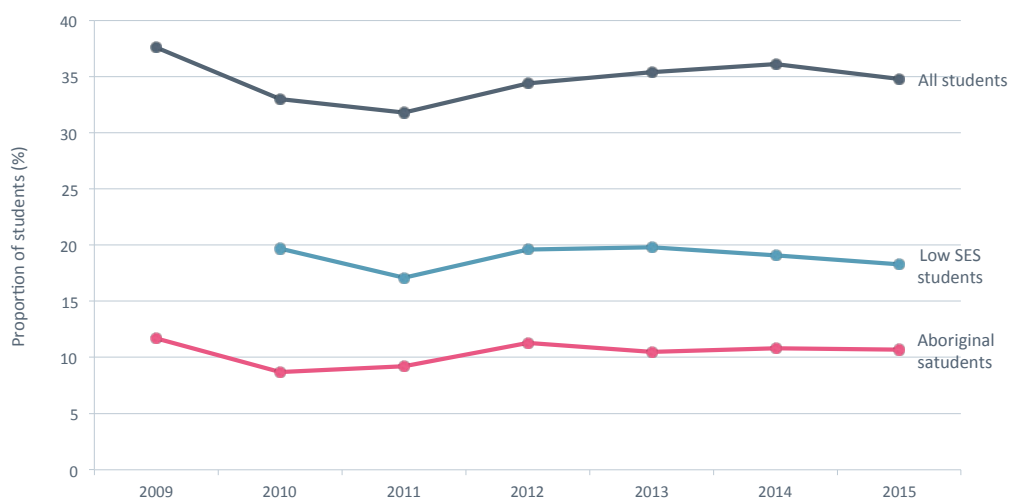


The proportion of all Year 5 students achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading has decreased by 2.8 percentage points since 2009, falling to 34.8 per cent in 2015. A similar pattern was experienced for both Aboriginal students (falling from 11.7 per cent in 2009 to 10.7 per cent 2015) and low SES students (falling from 32.5 per cent in 2010 to 31.8 per cent in 2015). These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.6:

Proportion of Year 5 students in the top two NAPLAN reading bands, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015



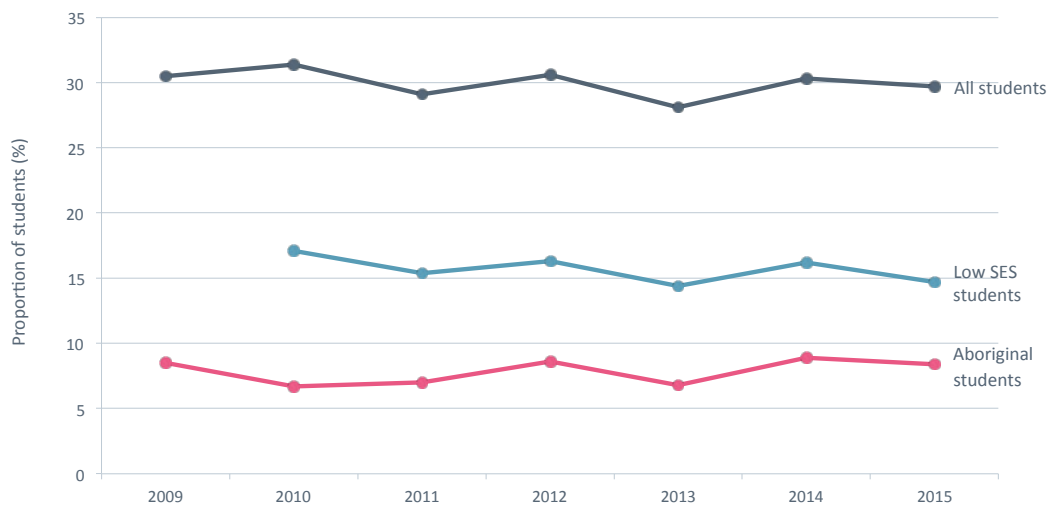
²¹ Trends in NAPLAN performance over 2009 to 2015 are determined by the significance ($\alpha = .05$) of a coefficient for calendar year in simple regression of the proportion of students in the top 2 bands or at or above the NMS, over calendar year.

The proportion of all Year 7 students in NSW achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading has fluctuated, decreasing 0.8 percentage points since 2009 to 39.7 per cent in 2015. The proportion of Year 7 Aboriginal students in the top two bands for reading has remained relatively stable (8.4 per cent in 2015). The proportion of low SES students fell from 17.1 per cent in 2010 to 14.7 per cent in 2015. These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.8:

Proportion of Year 9 students in the top two NAPLAN reading bands, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

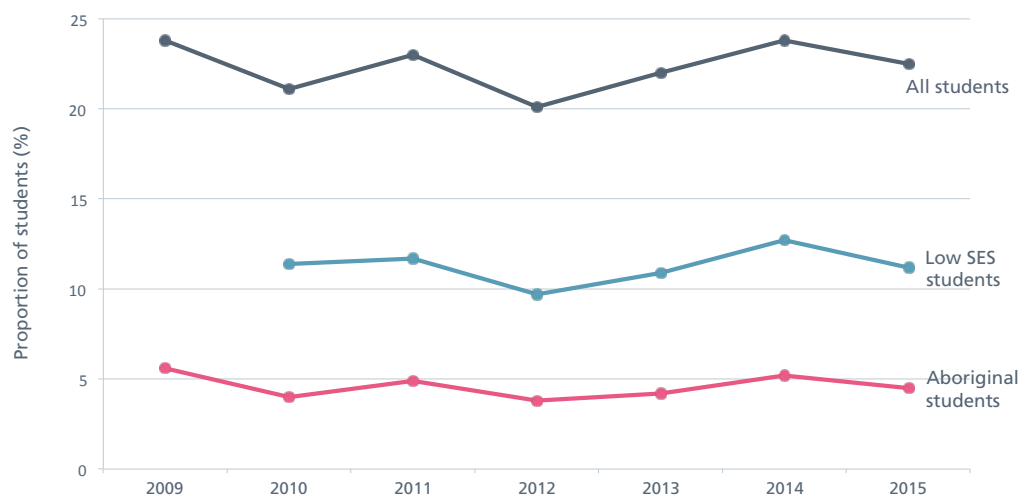


The proportion of all Year 9 students achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading has decreased by 1.3 percentage points since 2009, falling to 22.5 per cent in 2015. The proportion of Year 9 Aboriginal students has also decreased over the same time period, falling from 5.6 per cent to 4.5 per cent in 2015. The proportion of Year 9 low SES students in the top two bands for reading has remained relatively stable (11.2 per cent in 2015). These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.7:

Proportion of Year 7 students in the top two NAPLAN reading bands, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

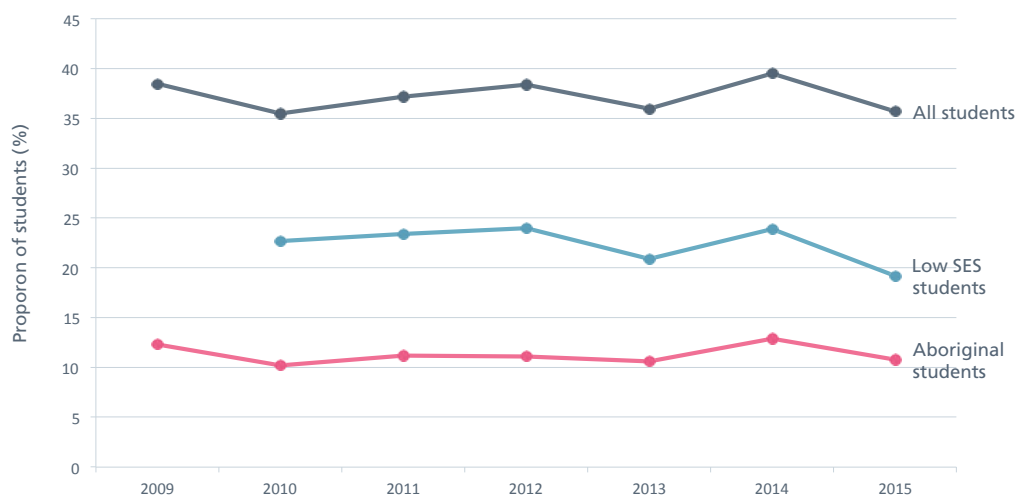


The proportion of all Year 3 students achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands for numeracy has decreased by 2.8 percentage points since 2009, falling to 35.7 per cent in 2015. Whilst a similar pattern was experienced by Year 3 Aboriginal students (falling from 12.3 per cent in 2009 to 10.8 per cent in 2015), the gap between all students and Aboriginal students narrowed by 1.3 percentage points. The proportion of low SES students in the top two NAPLAN bands for numeracy fell from 22.7 per cent in 2010 to 19.2 per cent in 2015. These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.9:

Proportion of Year 3 students in the top two NAPLAN numeracy bands, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

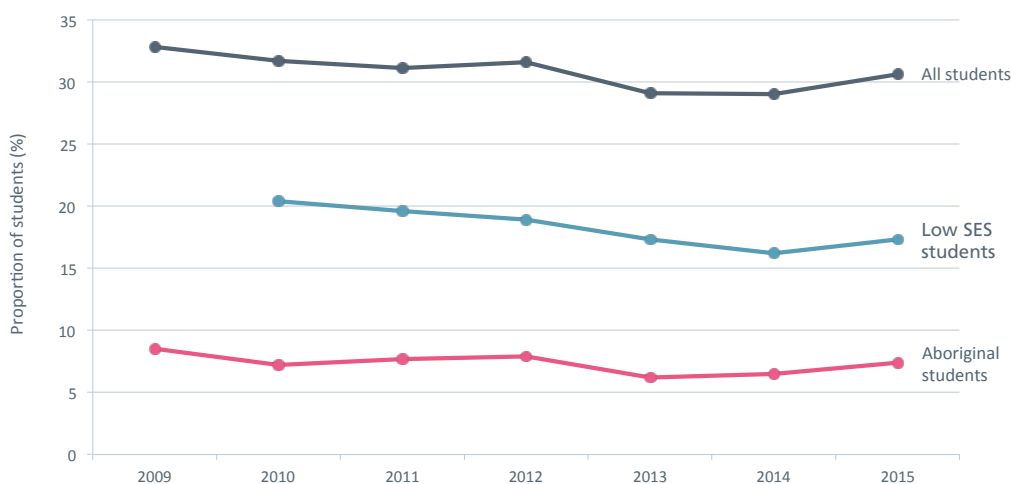


The proportion of all Year 5 students achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands for numeracy has decreased by 2.2 percentage points since 2009, falling to 30.6 per cent in 2015. A similar decrease was experienced for both Aboriginal students (falling from 8.5 per cent in 2009 to 7.4 per cent 2015) and low SES students (falling from 20.4 per cent in 2010 to 17.3 per cent in 2015). The declining trends are significant across all students ($p = .04$) and low SES students ($p = .01$), but not across Aboriginal students ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.10:

Proportion of Year 5 students in the top two NAPLAN numeracy bands, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

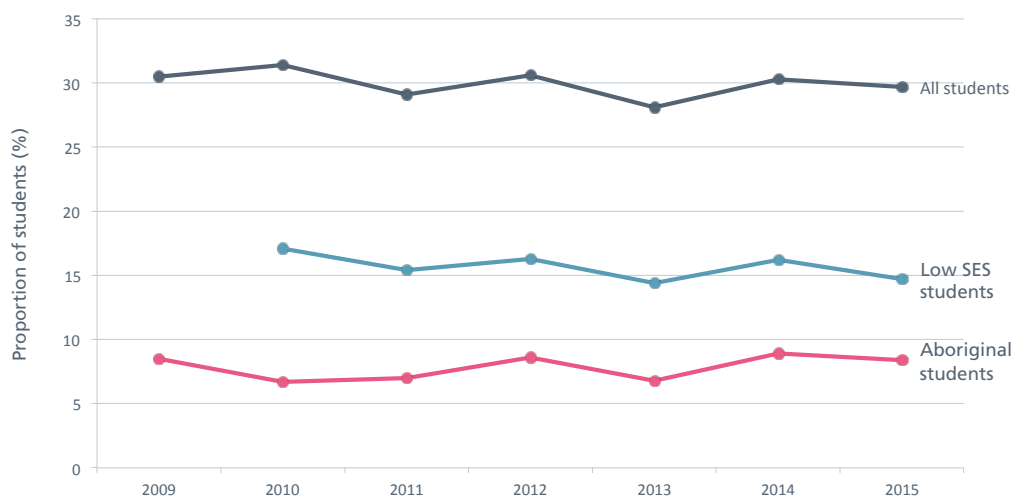


The proportion of all Year 7 students in the top two NAPLAN bands for numeracy has experienced a decline since 2009, falling from 31.2 per cent in 2009 to 28.2 per cent in 2015. The decline for Year 7 Aboriginal students was less marked, decreasing from 6.8 per cent in 2009 to 5.6 per cent 2015 – narrowing the gap by 1.8 percentage points. The proportion of low SES students in the top two NAPLAN bands for numeracy fell from 19.0 per cent in 2010 to 16.1 per cent in 2015. The declining trend is significant across low SES students ($p = .01$) but not across all students or Aboriginal students ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.11 :

Proportion of Year 7 students in the top two NAPLAN numeracy bands, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

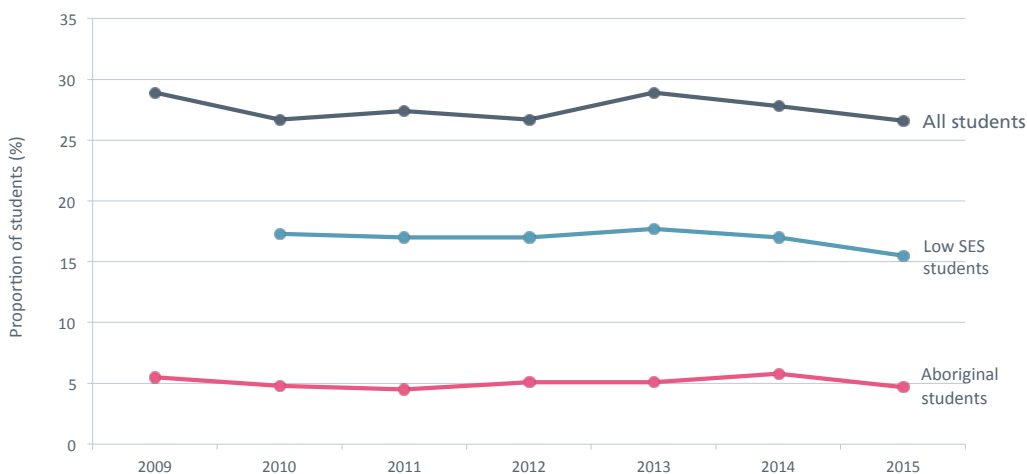


The proportion of all Year 9 students achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands for numeracy has decreased by 2.3 percentage points since 2009, falling to 26.6 per cent in 2015. Both the proportions of Year 9 Aboriginal students (falling from 5.5 per cent in 2009 to 4.7 per cent in 2015) and low SES students (falling from 17.3 per cent in 2010 to 15.5 per cent in 2015) have also decreased. These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.12:

Proportion of Year 9 students in the top two NAPLAN numeracy bands, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015



NAPLAN outcomes – achievement at or above the National Minimum Standard

Why is it important?

Students who achieve in the second lowest band for their year group are said to have achieved the NMS expected of students in that year – the agreed minimum standard of knowledge and skills without which students will have trouble progressing effectively through school. Students who fall below the NMS have not achieved the learning outcomes expected for their year level²², increasing their risk of being unable to progress satisfactorily through school and receive the support they need to maximise potential.

What does the data tell us?

With the exception of Aboriginal students, the proportion of primary students achieving at or above the NMS has decreased from 2009 to 2015. Over the same period, the proportion of secondary school students, including Aboriginal and low SES, has increased.

Trends for each assessment presented in the figures in the following Table 1.2.

Table 1.2:

Change in percentage of students achieving at or above the NMS for reading and numeracy between 2009 and 2015, NSW

Source: Derived from ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy

Change in the percentage of all students – at or above the NMS (2009-2015)		
	Reading	Numeracy
Year 3	– 0.3 percentage points	– 0.8 percentage points
Year 5	+ 0.1 percentage points	– 0.1 percentage points
Year 7	+ 1.1 percentage points	+ 1.0 percentage points
Year 9	– 1.0 percentage points	+ 0.3 percentage points

Change in the percentage of Aboriginal students – at or above the NMS (2009-2015)		
	Reading	Numeracy
Year 3	+ 0.8 percentage points	+ 0.3 percentage points
Year 5	+ 3.3 percentage points	+ 2.9 percentage points
Year 7	+ 6.1 percentage points	+ 6.1 percentage points
Year 9	– 1.5 percentage points	+ 4.1 percentage points

Change in percentage of low SES students – at or above the NMS (2010-2015)		
	Reading	Numeracy
Year 3	– 0.1 percentage points	– 1.1 percentage points
Year 5	– 0.1 percentage points	+ 0.2 percentage points
Year 7	+ 0.7 percentage points	+ 1.0 percentage points
Year 9	+ 0.2 percentage points	+ 3.0 percentage points

Note: * indicated trend from 2009 to 2015 is significantly different from zero at a 5% level of significance.

The proxy measure for low SES is parental occupation Category 4 (machine operators, hospitality staff, assistants, labourers), with NAPLAN results by parental occupation first made available in 2010. Parental occupation is self-reported and not a perfect proxy for low SES, meaning that results should be interpreted with caution.

Small cohort sizes can lead to greater year-on-year variability in NAPLAN results. This variability should be taken into consideration, especially when interpreting NAPLAN results for Aboriginal students in NSW.

Students who are exempt from NAPLAN are deemed to be 'below' the NMS and are included in the denominator for calculating the percentage at or above the NMS.

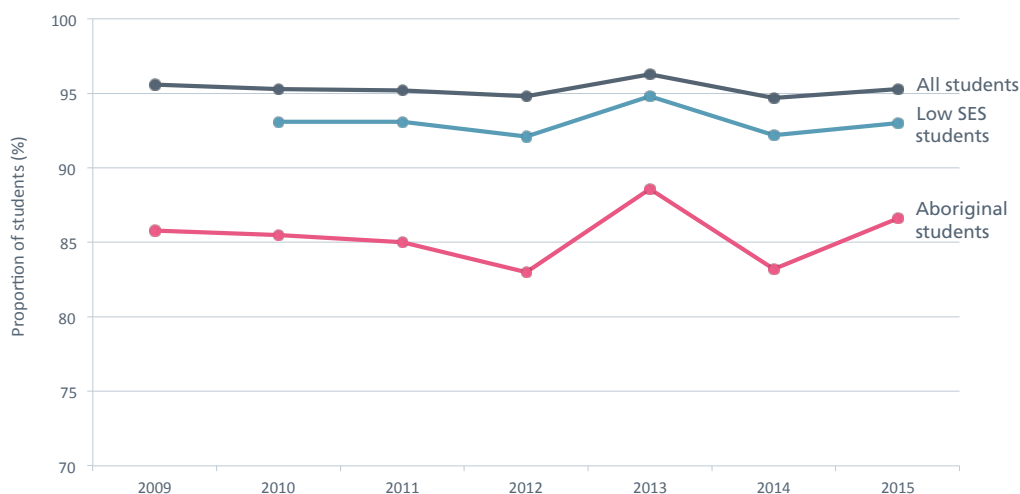
²² <http://www.nap.edu.au/results-and-reports/how-to-interpret/standards.html>

The proportion of all Year 3 students achieving at or above the NMS for NAPLAN in reading has remained steady since 2009 (falling from 95.6 in 2009 to 95.3 per cent in 2015). Over the same period the proportion of Year 3 Aboriginal students experienced growth, with the proportion at or above the NMS increasing from 85.8 per cent in 2009 to 86.6 per cent in 2015. This has resulted in the gap narrowing by 1.1 percentage points. The proportion of Year 3 low SES students at or above the NMS for NAPLAN in reading has also remained relatively stable (93.0 per cent in 2015). These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.13:

Proportion of Year 3 students at or above the NMS in NAPLAN reading, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

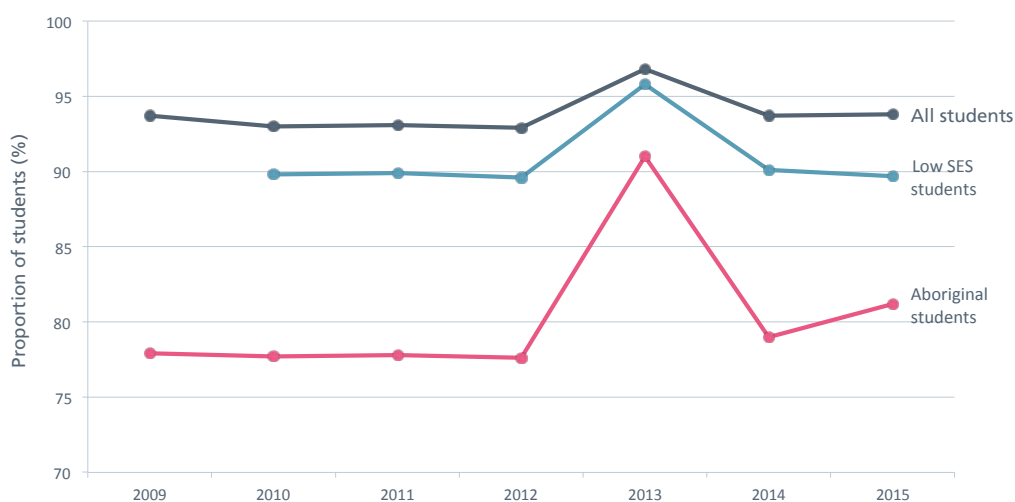


The proportion of Year 5 students achieving at or above the NMS in reading has remained stable despite a spike in 2013 (93.8 per cent in 2015). The proportion of Year 5 Aboriginal students experienced a more exaggerated spike in 2013 (13.4 percentage points), which was largely corrected in 2014. Since 2009 the percentage of Year 5 Aboriginal students at or above the NMS has increased by 3.3 percentage points (81.2 percentage points in 2015), resulting in the gap closing by 3.2 percentage points. The proportion of Year 3 low SES students has also remained relatively unchanged despite the spike in 2013 (89.7 per cent in 2015). These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.14:

Proportion of Year 5 students at or above the NMS in NAPLAN reading, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

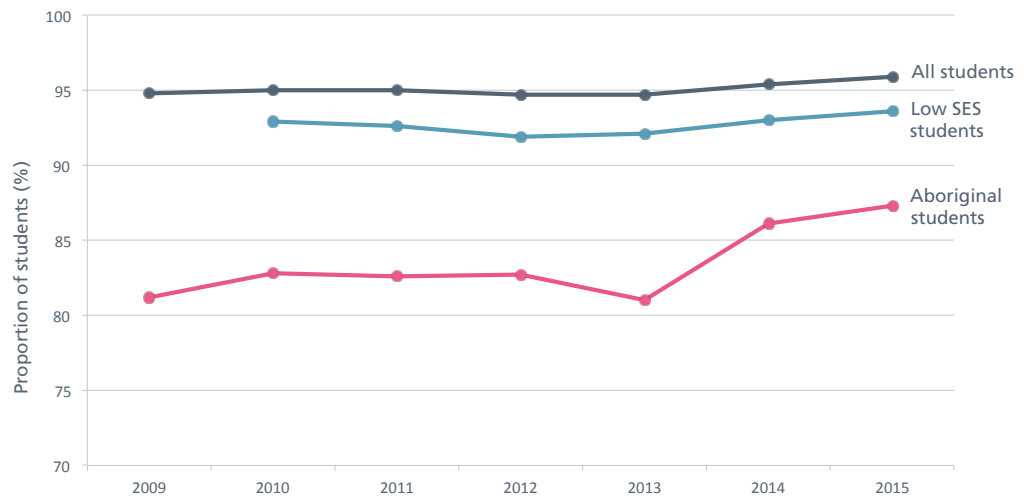


The proportion of all Year 7 students achieving at or above the NMS in NAPLAN for reading has increased by 1.1 percentage points since 2009, rising to 95.9 per cent in 2015. Over the same period the proportion of Year 7 Aboriginal students achieving at or above NMS increased by 6.1 percentage points to 87.3 per cent in 2015. This has resulted in a narrowing of the gap by 5.0 percentage points since 2009. The proportion of low SES students increased from 92.9 per cent in 2010 to 93.6 per cent in 2015. These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.15:

Proportion of Year 7 students at or above the NMS in NAPLAN reading, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

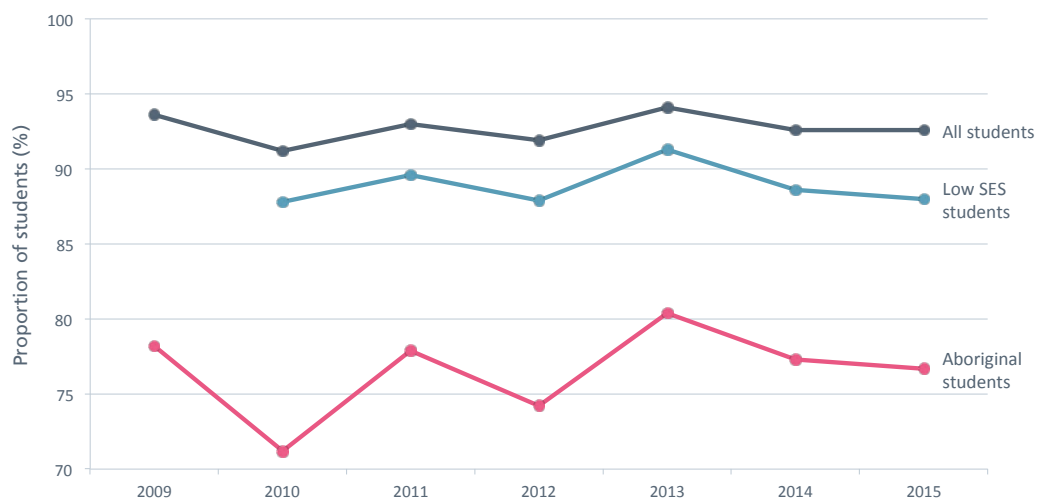


The proportion of all Year 9 students achieving at or above the NMS in NAPLAN for reading has decreased by 1.0 percentage points since 2009, falling to 92.6 per cent in 2015. The decline was greater for Year 9 Aboriginal students (falling from 78.2 per cent in 2009 to 76.7 per cent in 2015), whilst the proportions of low SES students have remained relatively stable (rising from 87.8 per cent in 2010 to 88.0 per cent in 2015). These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.16:

Proportion of Year 9 students at or above the NMS in NAPLAN reading, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

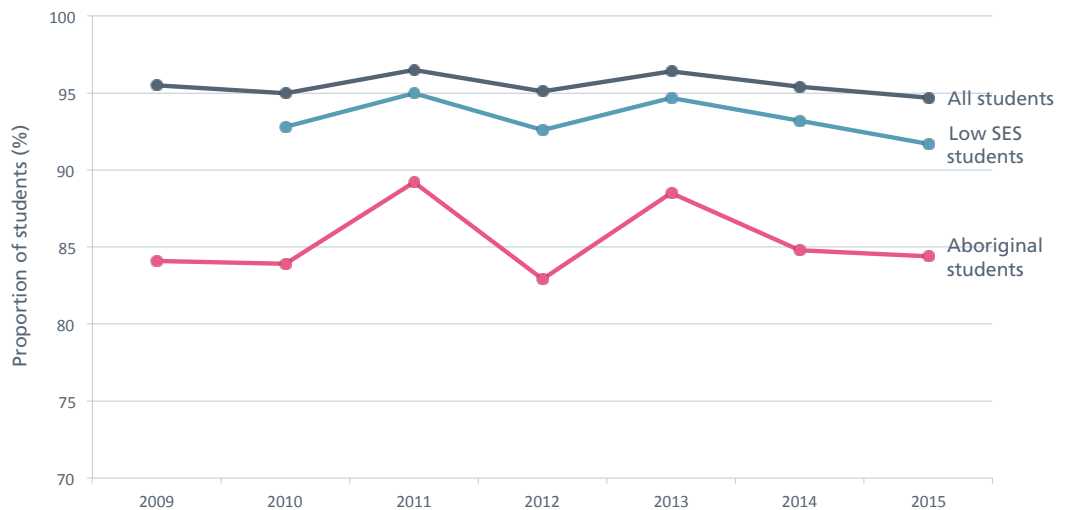


The proportion of all Year 3 students achieving at or above the NMS in NAPLAN for numeracy has decreased by 0.8 percentage points since 2009, falling to 94.7 per cent in 2015. Despite the considerable year-on-year volatility in the proportion of Year 3 Aboriginal students achieving at or above the NMS, there has been little change since 2009 (0.3 percentage point increase to 84.4 per cent in 2015). Following a similar pattern as all students, the proportion of low SES students at or above the NMS fell from 92.8 per cent in 2010 to 91.7 per cent in 2015. These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.17:

Proportion of Year 3 students at or above the NMS in NAPLAN numeracy, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

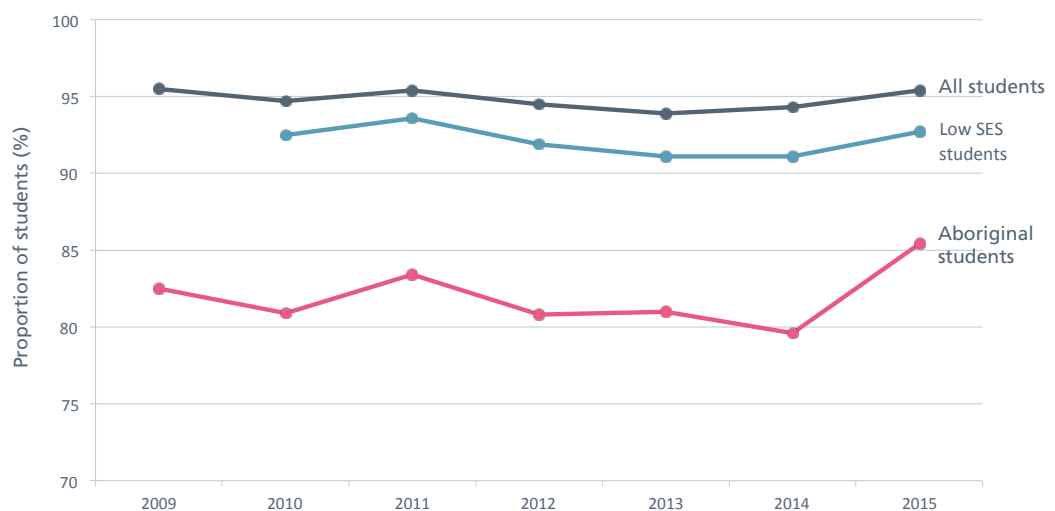


The proportion of all Year 5 students achieving at or above the NMS in numeracy has remained stable, falling 0.1 percentage points since 2009 (95.4 per cent in 2015). Conversely, the proportion of Year 5 Aboriginal students at or above the NMS has increased from 82.5 per cent in 2009 to 85.4 per cent in 2015 – leading to a reduction of the gap by 3.0 percentage points. Results will need to be carefully monitored to see if the recent increases for Aboriginal students continue for 2016 and beyond. Again following a similar pattern as all students, the proportion of low SES students at or above the NMS has remained stable since 2010 (rising 0.2 percentage points to 92.7 per cent in 2015). These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.18:

Proportion of Year 5 students at or above the NMS in NAPLAN numeracy, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

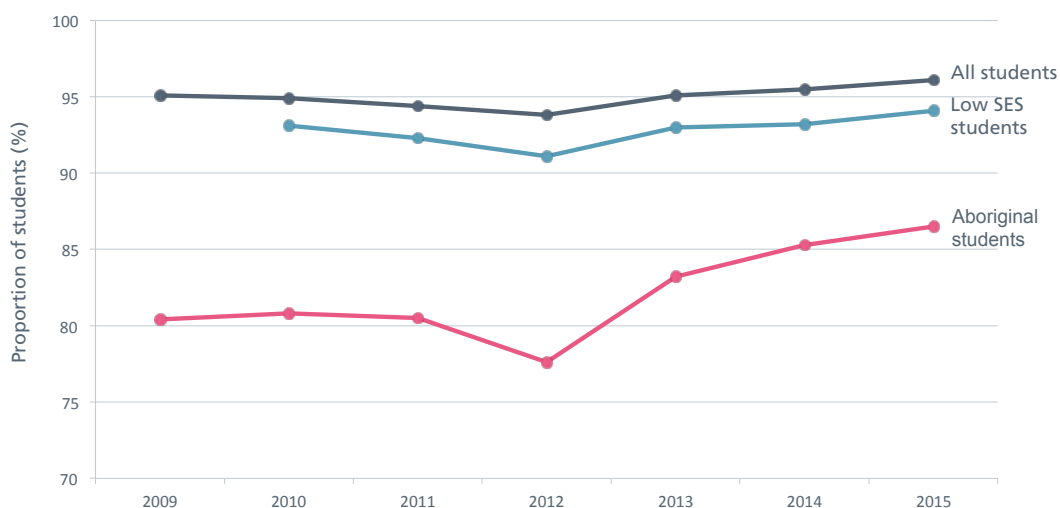


The proportion of all Year 7 students achieving at or above the NMS for numeracy has increased by 1.0 percentage points since 2009, rising to 96.1 per cent in 2015. The proportion of Year 7 Aboriginal students achieving at or above the NMS has increased even further over the same period of time rising from 80.4 per cent to 86.5 per cent in 2015 – leading to a reduction in the gap by 5.1 percentage points. The proportion of low SES students at or above the NMS increased from 93.1 per cent in 2010 to 94.1 per cent in 2015. These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.19:

Proportion of Year 7 students at or above the NMS in NAPLAN numeracy, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015

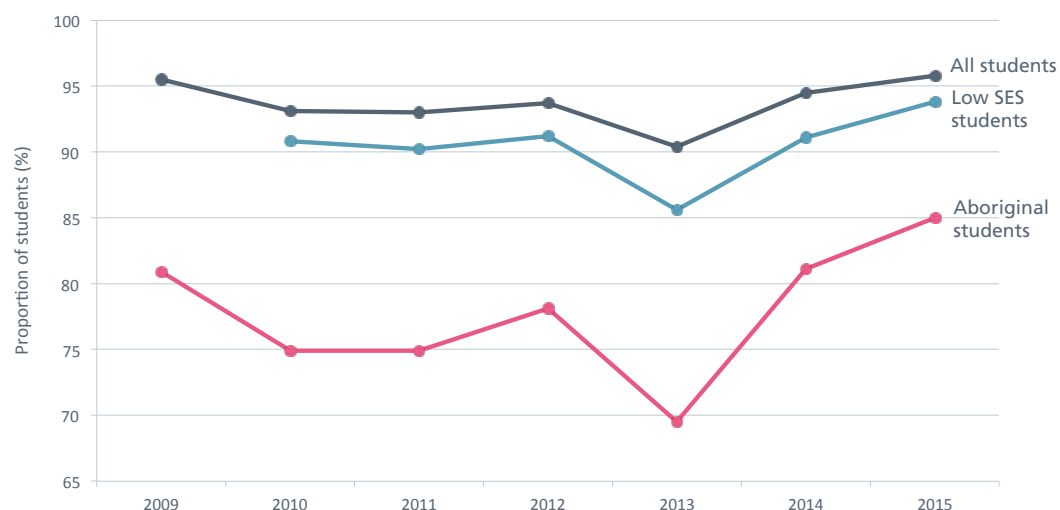


The proportion of all Year 9 students achieving at or above the NMS for numeracy has increased by 0.3 percentage points since 2009, rising to 95.8 per cent in 2015. Over the same time period, the proportion of Year 9 Aboriginal students increased by 4.1 percentage points (85.0 per cent in 2015), resulting in the gap closing by 3.8 percentage points. Following a similar pattern as all students, the proportion of Year 9 low SES students increased from 90.8 per cent in 2010 to 93.8 per cent in 2015. These trends are not significant ($p > .05$).

Figure 3.20:

Proportion of Year 9 students at or above the NMS in NAPLAN numeracy, NSW, 2009-15

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015



Apparent school retention rate

Why is it important?

Research shows that individuals who have successfully completed Year 12 have a greater likelihood of continuing with further education and study, engaging competitively in the workforce, and contributing to wider economic development (ABS, 2011). As such, all children in NSW are required to attend school or complete a number of alternative pathway options²³ until they reach 17 years old - helping to maximise potential and develop the skills needed for work and life.

The apparent retention rate is commonly used as a proxy measure of school engagement and completion, and is calculated by dividing the number of students in Year 12 by the number of students who were in Year 7 five years prior. This statistic is an 'apparent' retention rate as it does not track each individual student. By monitoring this, we have an indicative measure of student engagement and what proportions of students are leaving school after completing Year 12.

What does the data tell us?

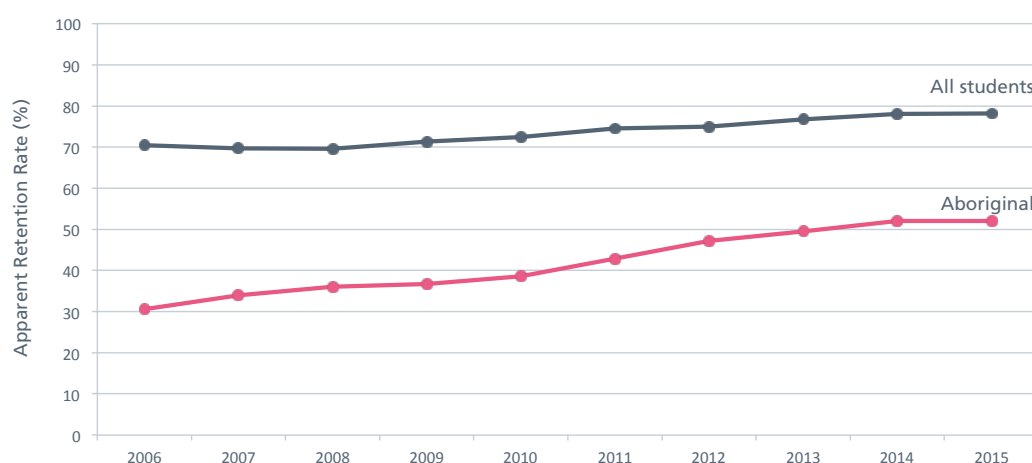
The apparent school retention rate has steadily increased for all students across NSW since 2006, with this upwards trend evident before the NSW school-leaving age was raised to 17 in 2010. However, at 78.2 per cent, the apparent retention rate for all students in 2015 was lower in NSW than the national average of 84.4 per cent.

The data also shows that the apparent retention rate for Aboriginal students has consistently been lower than the rate for all students in NSW. However, there have been marked improvements over the last decade. In 2015, 52.1 per cent of Aboriginal students were progressing through to their final year of schooling, increasing from 30.6 per cent in 2006. This has resulted in a 13.8 percent reduction in the gap between Aboriginal students and all students (26.1 per cent gap in 2015). Whilst the data reflects improvements in the apparent retention rate, it should be recognised that there is an increasing propensity for young adults to identify as Aboriginal, especially as they grow older.

Figure 3.21:

Full-time apparent retention rates, Years 7-12, Aboriginal and All students, NSW, 2006-15

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Schools Australia 2014, Table 64a Apparent Retention Rates (ARR) by Year (grade) Range, Affiliation, Sex, Indigenous Status, States and Territories, 2000-2015



²³ Options include further education, apprenticeships or traineeships, and full-time paid employment. Students can also undertake a combination of these options.

Year 12 or an Australian Quality Framework (AQF) equivalent

Why is it important?

The need to complete the final year of school has become increasingly important for labour market outcomes, with fewer jobs being offered in manufacturing and other industries that traditionally employed young people without qualifications. However, completing secondary school is not the only option for students, and many young adults choose to complete a vocational qualification instead. Given this, targets for Year 12 attainment are measured in terms of Year 12 and/or its vocational equivalent in the AQF.

Monitoring these outcomes provides an indication of educational achievement for all young people, and is important for understanding which post-compulsory education pathways are suited for particular groups of young people. Currently AQF Certificate Level II or above is recognised as the vocational equivalent to Year 12 when analysing educational attainment levels. However, the level is set to change to Certificate Level III or above in 2020 to meet agreed Council of Australian Governments' specifications.

What does the data tell us?

The rate of young people aged 20–24 years with a Year 12 or Certificate II²⁴ qualification or above has increased over the last decade, rising from 82.0 per cent in 2006 to 88.8 per cent in 2015. This has been influenced by a number of factors, one of which is the commitment to raising the official school leaving age of young people.

In contrast to the trend for all young people, those from low SES²⁵ backgrounds have experienced a decline in Year 12 or Certificate II attainment, decreasing from 79.1 per cent in 2012 to 78.0 per cent in 2015. Notably, the rate of education attainment for low SES students was 10.8 percentage points lower in 2015 than for all young people in NSW.

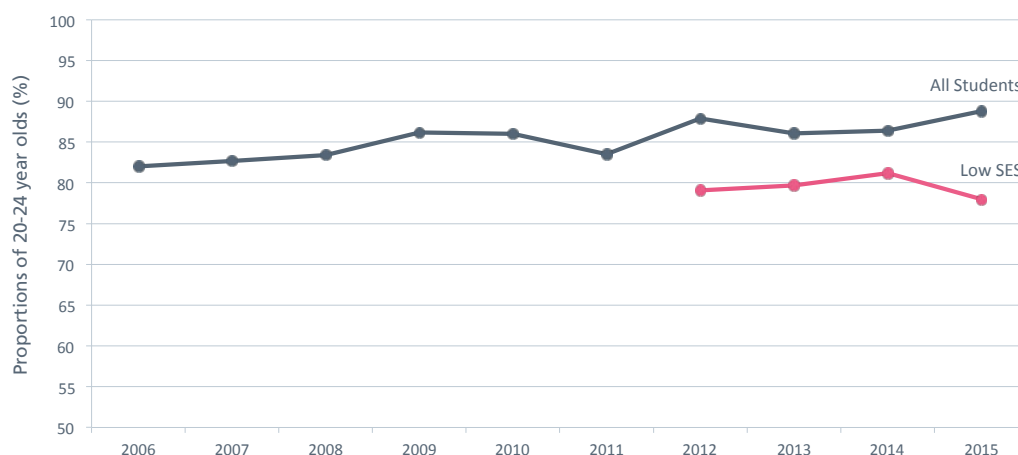


Figure 3.22:

20-24 year olds with Year 12 or AQF Certificate II or above, All students and Low SES students, NSW, 2006-15

Source: (Unpublished) Australian Bureau of Statistics, Education and Work, Year 12 (or equivalent) or a non-school qualification at Certificate II level or above, persons aged 15–64 years, 2015. Indigenous States and Territories, 2000-2015

The proportion of young people aged 20–24 years with Year 12 attainment or Certificate III²⁶ qualification or above has also increased over the last decade, rising from 81.1 per cent in 2006 to 88.2 per cent in 2015. However, for young adults from regional and remote areas, education attainment levels remain below that of all students in NSW at 77.3 per cent in 2015.

²⁴ Data for this indicator is not available for regional and remote students, or for Aboriginal students

²⁵ Based on SEIFA Deciles of 1, 2 and 3 (IRSD)

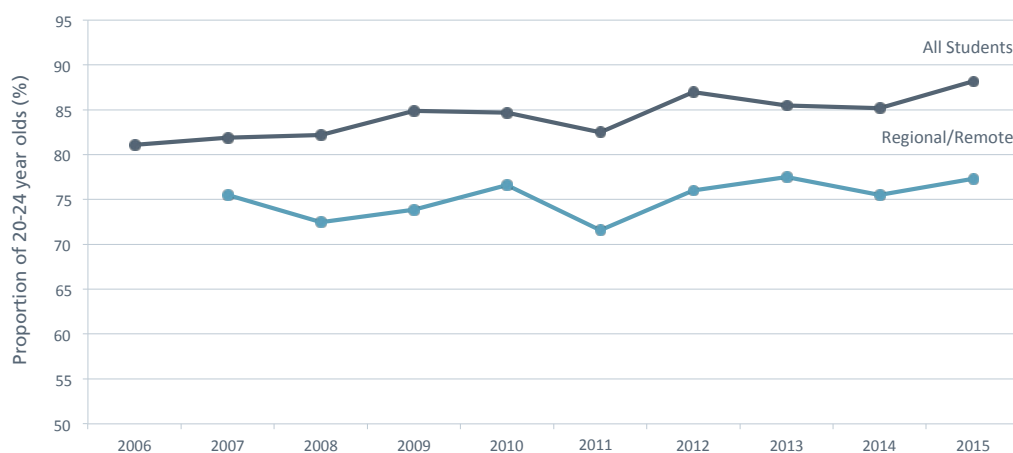
²⁶ Data for this indicator is not available for Aboriginal students.

Whilst currently there is no time series available for low SES students, the Report on Government Services (RoGS) has published data for 2014, reporting that 72.7 per cent of 20-24 year olds from low SES²⁷ backgrounds had completed either Year 12 or a Certificate III equivalent. This was below the attainment of all students (85.2 per cent) and of students from regional and remote areas (75.5 per cent) in that year.

Figure 3.23:

20-24 year olds with Year 12 or AQF Certificate III or above, All students and Regional and Remote students, NSW, 2006-15

Source: (Unpublished) Australian Bureau of Statistics, Education and Work, Year 12 (or equivalent) or a non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above, persons aged 15-64 years, 2015

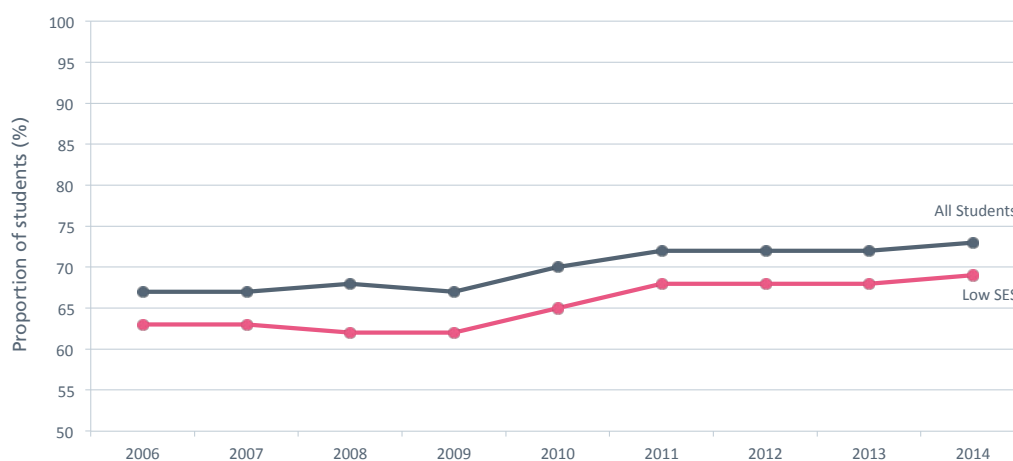


The proportion of young people from low SES²⁸ backgrounds who have completed Year 12 has increased from 63.0 per cent in 2006 to 69.0 per cent in 2014. This growth was most pronounced between 2009 and 2011, where the Year 12 completion rate increased by six percentage points. The Year 12 completion rate for low SES students remains 4.0 percentage points below all students (73.0 per cent in 2014), the same gap as in 2006.

Figure 3.24:

Year 12 completion rates for All students and Low SES students, NSW, 2006-14

Source: Report on Government Services 2016, vol. B School education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 4A.124



Note: This data refers predominantly to Year 12 Certificates issued from mainly academic streams, and does not include completions from courses that have a large vocational component. This collection is therefore not suitable as a measure of Year 12 or equivalent attainment, but only for completion of the Year 12 Certificate.

²⁷ Based on SEIFA Deciles of 1, 2 and 3 (IRSD).

²⁸ Based on SEIFA Deciles of 1, 2 and 3 (IRSD).

HSC award and ATAR eligibility

Why is it important?

The Higher School Certificate (HSC) is the highest educational award in NSW schools and is presented to students who successfully complete Years 11 and 12. To be eligible, students must meet HSC course requirements and sit for the requisite state-wide HSC examinations (BOSTES, 2016). The HSC provides a foundation for students wishing to pursue tertiary qualifications, vocational training or employment. The HSC acts as a platform for enriching students' life choices, and is an important indicator of the post-school options for many students.

School leavers wanting to attend university need to complete a specific pattern of study for their HSC in order for them to be eligible for an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). The ATAR is the selection tool used by universities to offer students places in courses and depends solely on a student's performance in the HSC. To be eligible, a student must satisfactorily complete at least 10 units of ATAR eligible courses²⁹. Students can also complete VET courses during year 11 and 12 to receive AQF qualifications (typically at Certificate II or Certificate III level), in addition to their HSC credential.

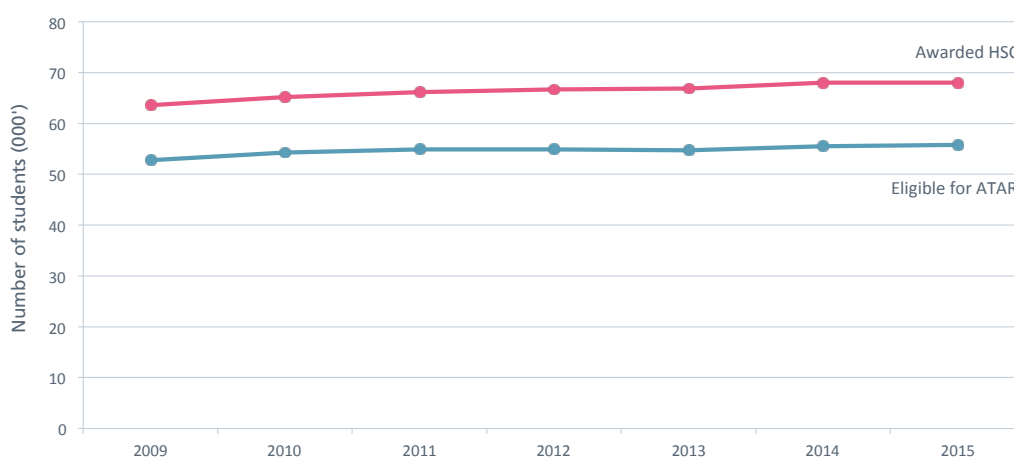
What does the data tell us?

The total number of students awarded the HSC in NSW has continued to increase since 2009, reaching a record 68,015 students in 2015³⁰. This reflects an improvement in the school retention rate over the period, particularly since the school leaving age was raised in 2010. The number of students eligible for an ATAR has also risen, though at a lesser rate. This suggests the possibility that some students who in previous years may have left school early are staying on to complete the HSC but are not choosing to apply for university.

Figure 3.25:

HSC and ATAR candidature, All students, NSW, 2009-15

Source: (Unpublished) NSW BOSTES, NSW Statistics Archive



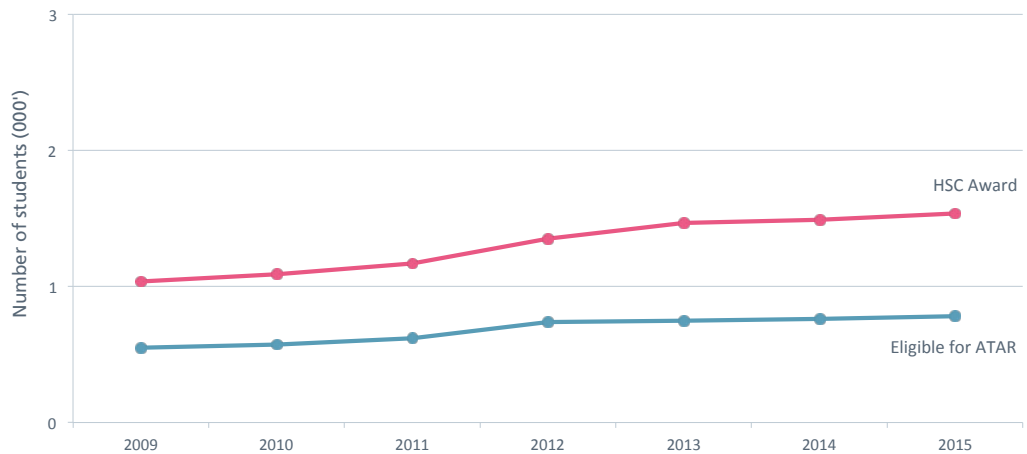
²⁹ <http://www.uac.edu.au/atar/courses.shtml>

³⁰ Data as of 19th February, 2016. Any discrepancies between published BOSTES data reflect updates of student records after the release of results.

The same trend is evident for Aboriginal students, with the number of students awarded the HSC rising from 1,036 in 2009 to 1,537 in 2015 - representing an increase of 48.4 per cent. Over the same period, those eligible for an ATAR increased by 42.4 per cent to 782 in 2015.

Figure 3.26:
HSC and ATAR candidature, Aboriginal students, NSW, 2009-15

Source: (Unpublished) NSW BOSTES, NSW Statistics Archive



In the case of both low SES and rural and remote students, the numbers of students awarded the HSC and eligible for an ATAR have been relatively stable over 2009 to 2015, suggesting that the observed increases in the total number of students awarded the HSC are primarily for metropolitan students.

Figure 3.27:
HSC and ATAR candidature, Low SES students, NSW, 2009-15

Source: (Unpublished) NSW BOSTES, NSW Statistics Archive

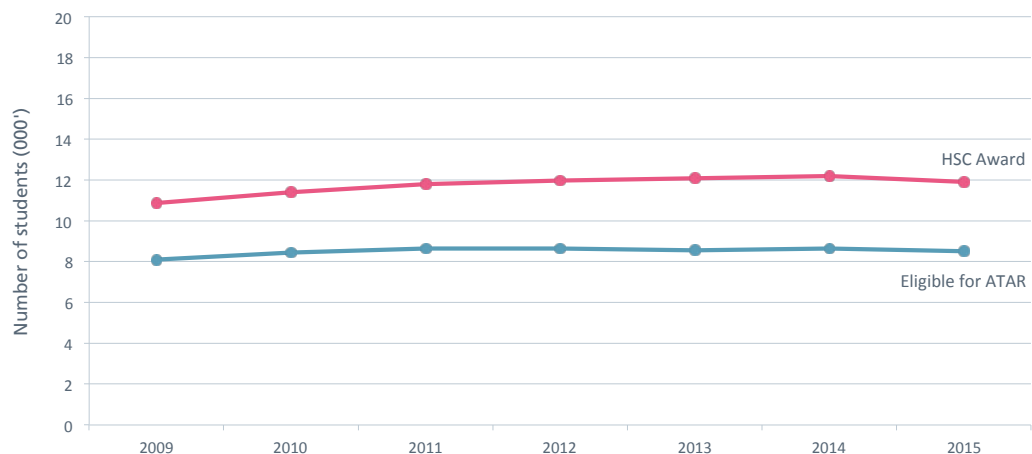
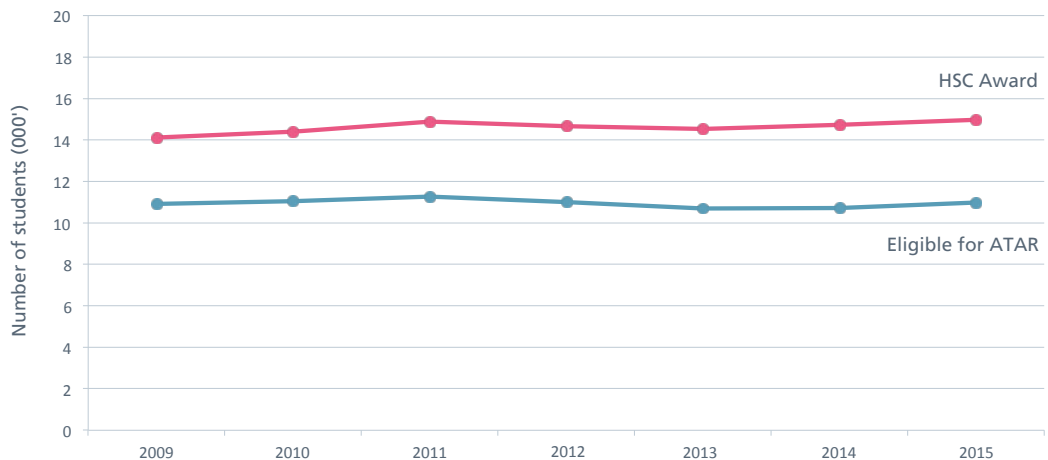


Figure 3.28:
HSC and ATAR candidature, Regional and Remote schools, NSW, 2009-15

Source: (Unpublished) NSW BOSTES, NSW Statistics Archive



Post-school destinations of NSW secondary students

Why is it important?

The cross-sectoral *Survey of Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations* seeks to provide critical information on education pathways and post-school destinations of all young people in NSW, as well as the factors influencing those choices. Research shows the number of years in school is a significant predictor of future employment and earnings (Wei, 2016), and long term changes in the NSW labour market suggest a growing importance of appropriate education and training to employment outcomes. The adequate monitoring of these post-school pathways and the reasons for leaving school early, informs policy planning on achieving successful outcomes for young people.

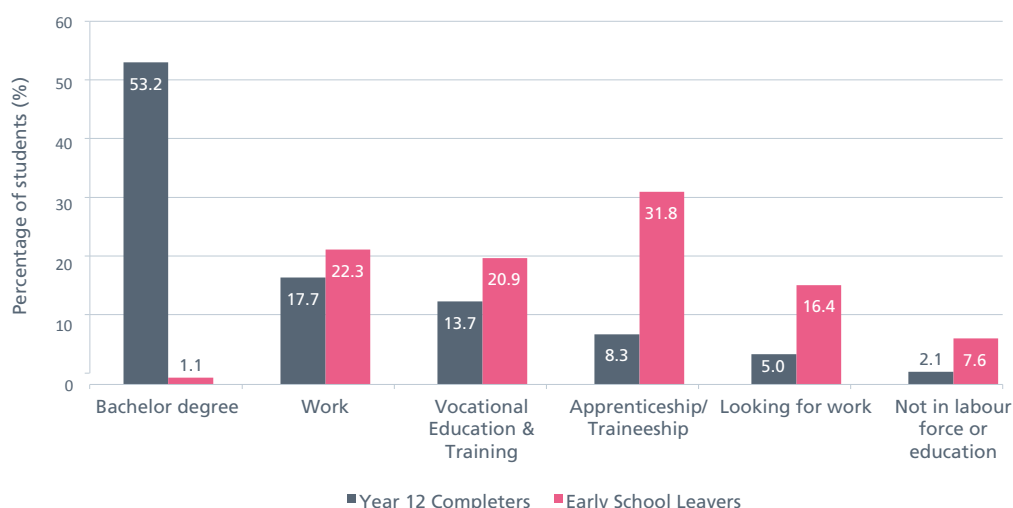
What does the data tell us?

In 2015, the most common destination among all Year 12 completers was university, with slightly more than half (53.2 per cent) commencing a Bachelor degree in the year immediately following school. In contrast, only 1.1 per cent of students who left school prior to completing Year 12 (early school leavers) started a Bachelor degree via alternative options. Just over half of early leavers entered into formal apprenticeships and traineeships (31.8 per cent), or VET (20.9 per cent). A further 22.3 per cent of early leavers were engaged in part-time or full-time employment and 16.4 per cent were looking for work.

Figure 3.29:

Post-school destinations of Year 12 completers and early school leavers, all students, NSW, 2015

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations - 2015 Annual Report, Tables 1 and 9

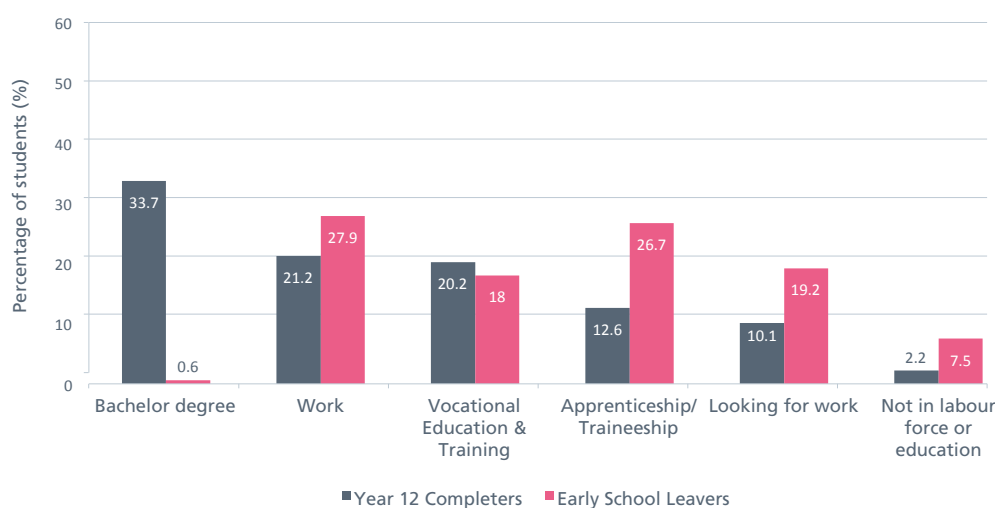


In 2015 the most common destination among low SES³¹ Year 12 completers was university (33.7 per cent), which is much lower than the proportion across all students (53.2 per cent) commencing a Bachelor degree. More low SES Year 12 completers entered into work (21.2 per cent) and VET (20.2 per cent) compared to all Year 12 completers. In contrast, the most common destination for low SES students who left school prior to completing Year 12 was work (27.9 per cent) and formal apprenticeships and traineeships (26.7 per cent).

Figure 3.30:

Post-school destinations of Year 12 completers and early school leavers, by low SES, NSW, 2015

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations - 2015 Annual Report, Tables 3 and 11



³¹ SES is derived from students' answers to questions about their parents main occupation and highest level of education.

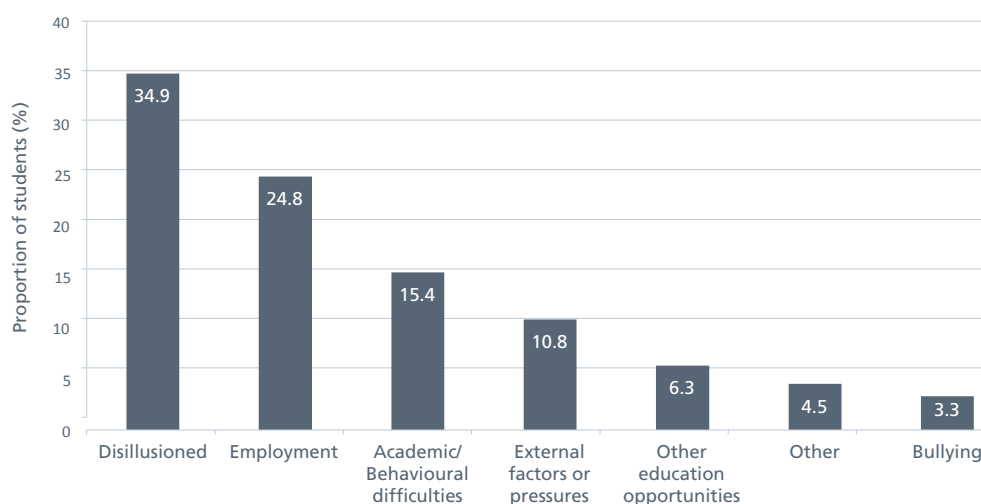
In 2015, the most commonly self-reported reasons for leaving school early related to feeling disillusioned with school (34.9 per cent), wanting to pursue employment and career options (24.8 per cent) and having academic or behavioural difficulties at school (15.4 per cent). The main reasons for disillusionment with school were students not liking teachers, a lack of interest in school and a belief that school was 'not for them'. 10.8 per cent of responses by early school leavers cited external factors or pressures as the main reason for leaving schools, with a collection of circumstances relating to personal illness, caring for and having children reported. Notably, females were over-represented in this group of early school leavers, with 16.1 per cent of females reporting external pressure as their main reason for leaving school early compared to 7.2 per cent of males. The least-cited main reason for leaving school early was bullying (3.3 per cent).

For a full description and analysis on NSW students' post school destinations, please see: http://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/Destination_and_Expectations_Report_2015.pdf

Figure 3.31:

Self-reported main reason for leaving school early by early school leavers, all schools, NSW, 2015

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations - 2015 Annual Report



Note: Results are self-reported 'main' reasons for leaving school early, and survey respondents often cited multiple reasons.

Teacher accreditation

Why is it important?

Research consistently shows high-quality teaching to be the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and achievement (OECD, 2009). The teacher accreditation system assesses the evidence of teachers' practice against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers³² and in NSW is overseen by BOSTES. National Professional Standards for teachers articulate what teachers are expected to know and be able to do at four career stages: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead.

Accreditation has been a requirement for all new and returning teachers in NSW since 2004, and by 2018 it will be mandatory for all teachers. Whilst the accreditation of all NSW teachers is a relatively recent requirement and the full coverage of all NSW teachers is expected to take some time.

³² <http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/publications-policies-resources/publications/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers>

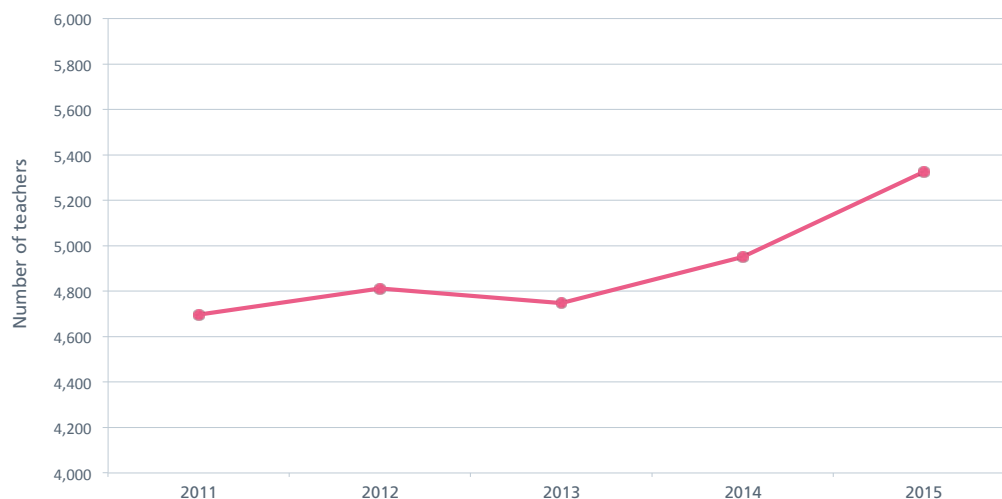
What does the data tell us?

Becoming fully accredited at the Proficient Teacher level is a process that all graduate teachers must complete over a set timeframe, and involves demonstrating competency at a required level across all the standard descriptors. Apart from a minor fall in 2013, the number of teachers becoming accredited annually is increasing, reaching a peak of 5,325 in 2015. As more teachers are required to be accredited at this level, numbers will continue to increase until all teachers are accredited by 2018.

Figure 3.32:

Number of teachers newly accredited as being a Proficient Teacher, all schools, NSW, 2011-15

Source: (Unpublished) NSW BOSTES, NSW Statistics Archive



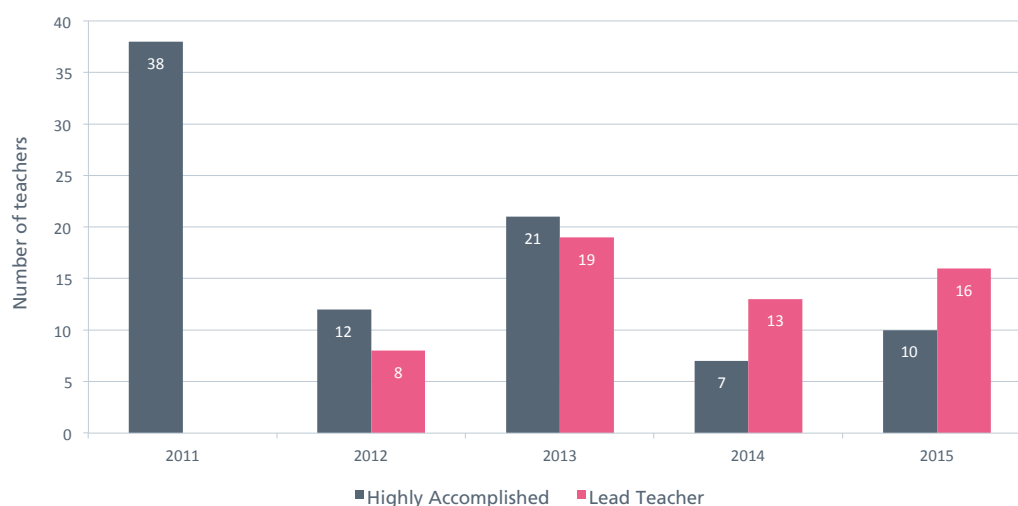
Applying for accreditation at either the Higher Accomplished or Lead Teacher level is a voluntary process for existing teachers and teachers already accredited at Proficient. Teachers have up to 3 years to complete the process, although they are able to complete a submission in a much shorter timeframe if they are ready to apply. Accreditation at Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher is intended to promote quality teaching by applicants demonstrating outstanding teaching practice.

The number of teachers gaining accreditation at these higher levels since their introduction in 2011 has varied, with cumulatively more accreditations at Highly Accomplished (88) than Lead (56)³³ across all school sectors in 2015. All education sectors in NSW are enacting policies to encourage more teachers to apply for the higher levels. These numbers are therefore likely to increase with 455 new Highly Accomplished and 450 new Lead Teacher applications currently in progress³⁴.

Figure 3.33:

Number of teachers gaining accreditation at higher levels, all schools, NSW, 2013-15

Source: (Unpublished) NSW BOSTES, NSW Statistics Archive



³³ Reported numbers for 2013 vary from the last State of Education report, as figures published were only for the first half of 2013.

³⁴ <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-us/news-at-det/news/school-leadership-strategy1>