

Insights for Early Action

Resource pack

Using data and evidence to identify students
at risk of disengagement from school

July 2019

This pack includes resources developed to support school leaders and teachers to understand and take action on insights into students at risk of disengagement.

For full details and guidance on using these resources, including summary information from case study schools and national and international research, download the *Insights for Early Action* guide from the publications page on the Bastow website.

<https://www.bastow.vic.edu.au/learning-resources/publications>

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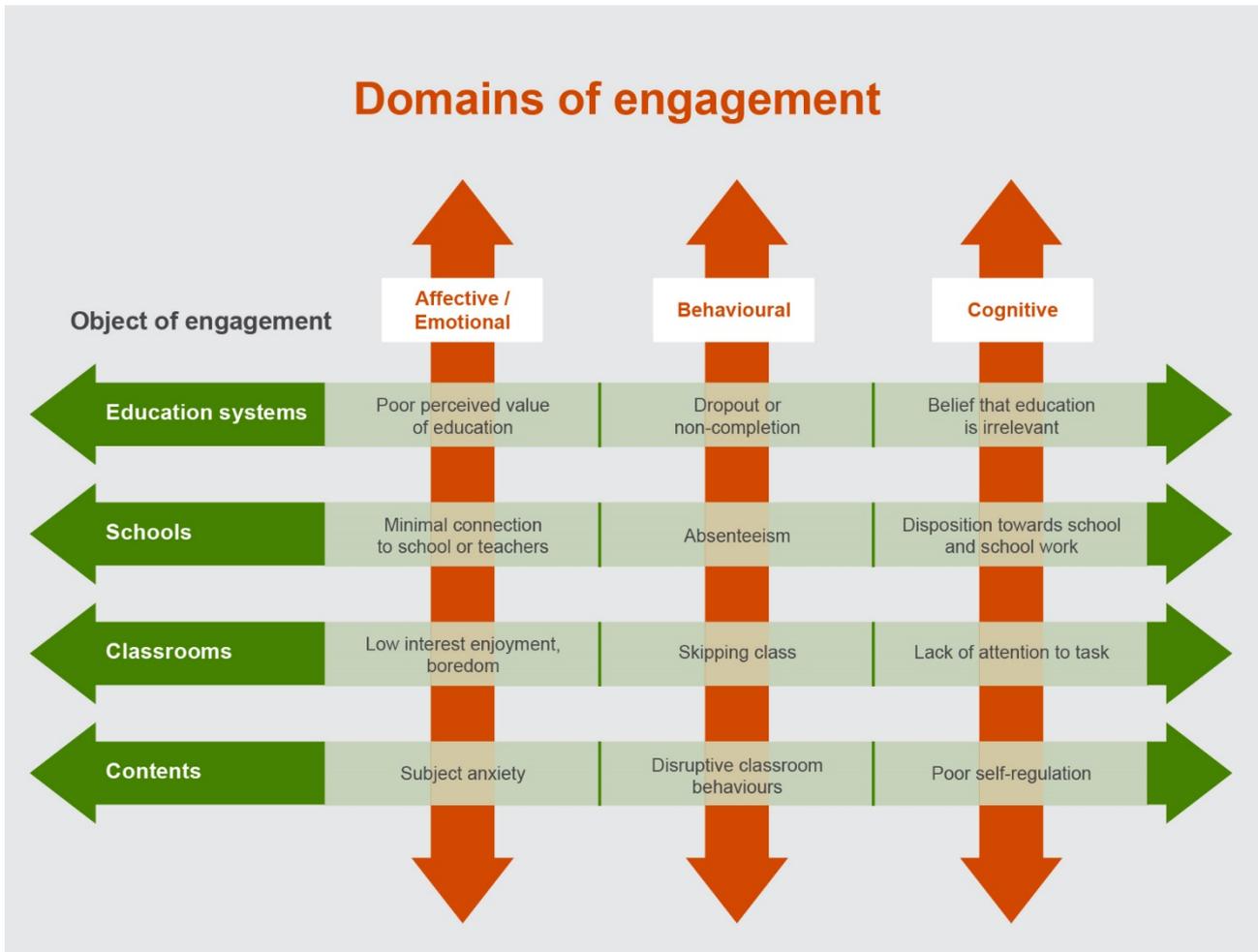
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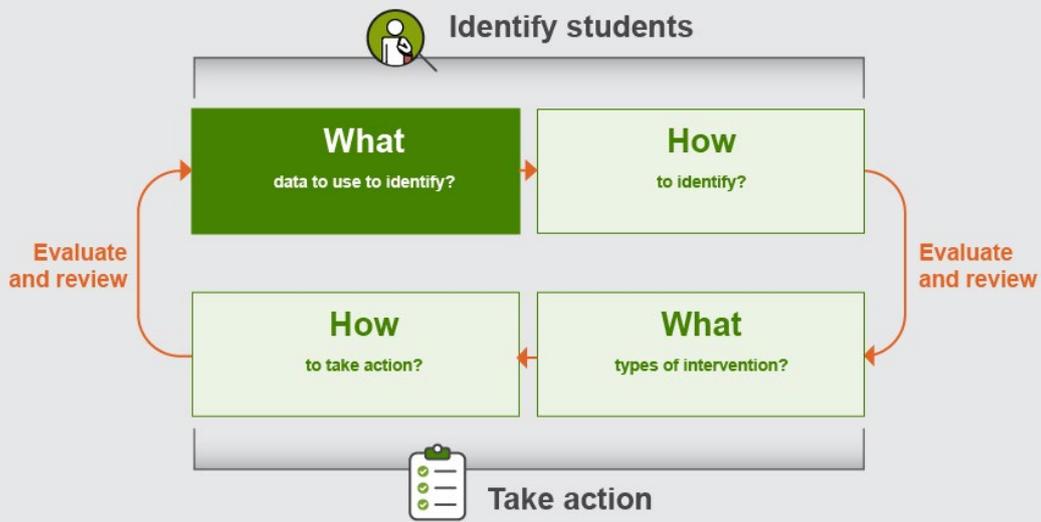
Domains of engagement



Source: Hancock and Zubrick (2015) © Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia.
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Hancock, K., & Zubrick, S. (2015). Children and young people at risk of disengagement from school. *Report for the Commissioner for Children and Young People*, p. 16, quoted in *Insights for Early Action Research Project Literature Review*, Mark Rickinson, Brea Kunstler and Mandy Salisbury, Faculty of Education, Monash University, September 2018, p. 7.

Insights paper framework



What are predictors?

Predictors are used 'to correctly identify the students who will drop out, without mistakenly flagging students who would have graduated anyway [or] missing students who are actually at risk of dropping out'.

Research shows that the most accurate dropout predictors examine trajectories of student achievement (e.g. mathematics achievement from Years 7–12) or student engagement (e.g. student engagement trajectories from Years 8–12) over long periods of time.

The next most accurate type of dropout predictors are those based on simple cross-sectional, school-based data such as grades. It is more accurate to combine multiple predictors and cast the net wide (i.e. select students who have predictor x or predictor y rather than selecting only students who have predictor x and predictor y).

Predictors of disengagement

There are some strong predictors of disengagement based on research evidence. These are used as indicators of disengagement in a number of case study schools in Victoria.

Level	Category	Strength of predictor	Predictor type	No. of research studies	No. of case study schools
 Student	 Educational performance		Academic progress	 	
			School attendance	 	
	 Behaviour		School behaviour		
			Social behaviour (peers)	 	
			Relationships with adults		
			Personal factors (gender, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing)	 	
	 Demographic factors		Ethnic background	 	
			Disability		
			Teenage parenting and childbearing		
	 Attitudinal factors		Educational aspirations		
 Family	 Family demographics		Socio-economic status		
			Family stress		
	 Educational support		Parent educational support and aspirations		
 School	 School environment		School level factors are generally limited predictors of disengagement; however, some specific factors such as school climate and teacher attitudes may be important predictors.		

The information in this infographic has been drawn from a global literature review and a case study investigation conducted by Monash University for the **Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership**.

Access the global literature review and summary of the case study schools at: www.bastow.vic.edu.au/learning-resources/publications

Key

-  Strong predictor of dropout
-  Moderate predictor of dropout
-  Limited predictor of dropout
-  High (20+ studies)
-  Medium (10-20 studies)
-  Low (1-10 studies)
-  Includes Australian studies
-  Used by all or most case study schools
-  Used by some case study schools
-  Used by a few case study schools

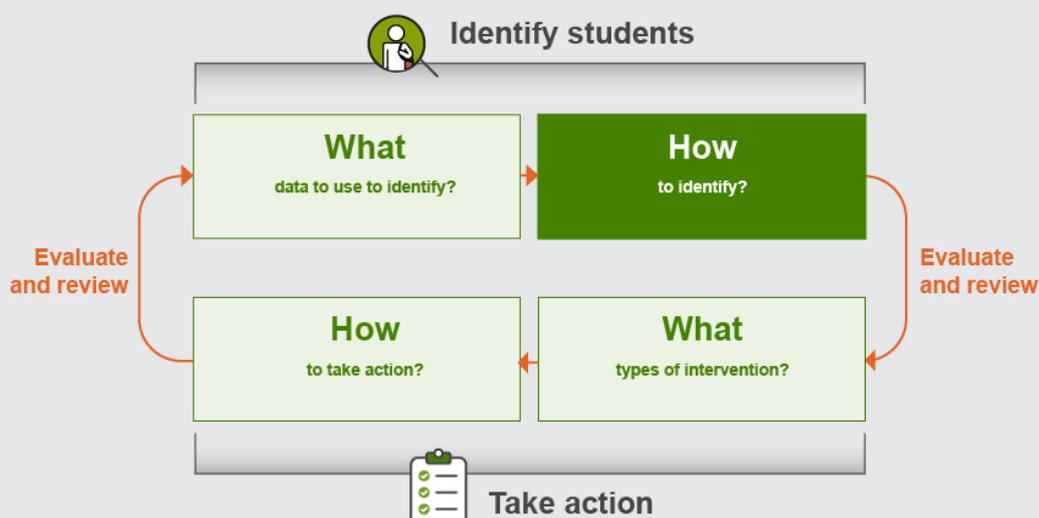
Signs of disengagement

There are a number of overt and subtle signs of disengagement, and some examples of these are provided below.

Level	Category	Predictor type	Overt	Subtle	
 Student		Academic progress	Falling behind or ahead by 12 months or more. Low reading levels in Prep – Year 3	Lack of interest or confidence in subject and assessment tasks, late submission, poor effort etc.	
		School attendance	Poor attendance (below 90%). Expulsion or suspension	Late to class	
		School behaviour	Repeated, documented serious behaviour incidents	Low-level misbehaviour in class	
		Social behaviour (peers)	Negative and anti-social behaviour, (e.g. smoking, drug or alcohol use)	Social withdrawal or limited connections to peers.	
		Relationships with adults	No connection with any adult in the school	Avoids asking for assistance from adults in or outside the school	
			Personal factors (gender, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing)	Diagnosed mental health issue	Shows some signs of poor social and emotional wellbeing
			Ethnic background	Identifies as a student from a non-English speaking background or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background	
			Disability	Diagnosed with a disability	Has an undiagnosed disability
 Family		Socio-economic status	Unemployed parents, unstable housing situation	Does not have money to participate in school events	
		Family stress	Recent changes to family structure, school aware of additional needs of parents (e.g. disability)	Poor relationship with parents	
		Parent educational support and aspirations	Parents are not engaged in any school activities or support for schooling (e.g. lack of attendance at school events, poor support for homework, lack of communication with school)	In discussions with teachers, students exhibit little motivation that their schooling will enhance their future possibilities	
 School		School-level factors are generally limited predictors although some specific factors such as school climate and teacher attitudes may be important predictors.	School characteristics e.g. school climate, resources available to support at-risk students	A student's perception of the school and classroom climate	
			Clear emphasis on school culture to motivate students	A student's perception of the learning culture in the school	

There are many types of overt and subtle signs that educators may observe in students. A student may exhibit a combination of signs and educators should use their professional judgement as to whether a student is at risk of disengagement.

Insights paper framework



Reflective questions

1. How do you and other staff at your school define student disengagement and being 'at risk' of disengagement?
2. What are the ways in which you might engage with wellbeing staff and Victorian Department of Education and Training regional staff in the early identification of students at risk of disengagement?
3. How might you and other staff work more closely with neighbouring schools and agencies to improve early identification of students at risk of disengagement?
4. What kinds of professional learning might you and other staff at your school undertake to support the collection, analysis and monitoring of data, and to work effectively with at-risk students?

Collection of data

Examples of how 10 Victorian case study schools collect information on indicators of disengagement

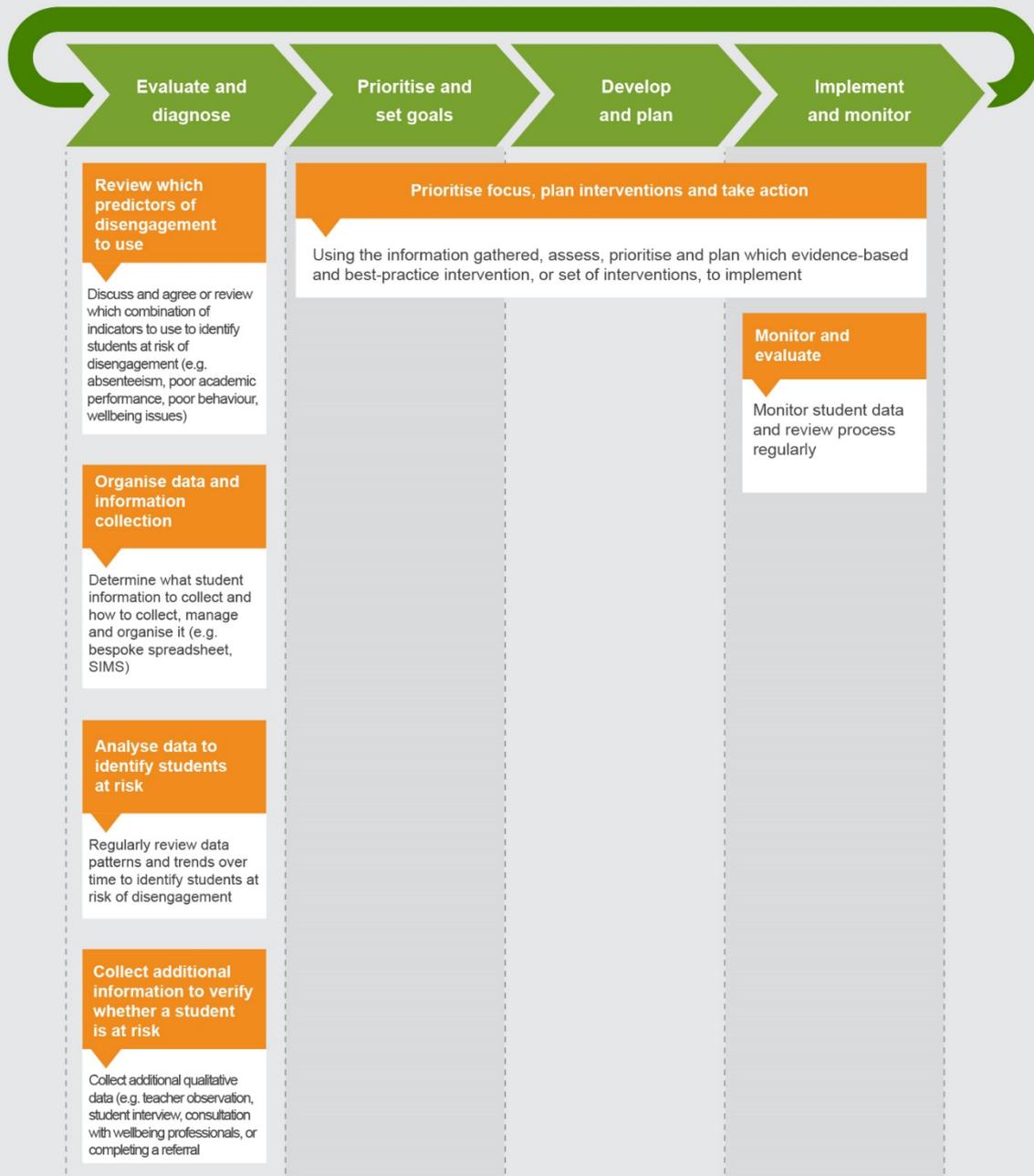
Level	Category of predictor	Type of data	Data assets
 Student	 Educational performance	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current and previous student performance reports (internal and external to the school) National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Victorian Assessment Software System (VASS)
	 Behaviour	Enrolment and attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on student attendance through student information management systems including information on unexplained absences Information about suspension and/or expulsion history
		Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from previous schools Previous student performance reports (e.g. from CASES21)
		Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recorded behaviour, conversations and attitudinal responses of the students (or other information collected as part of school-wide Positive Behaviour Support initiatives) General observations from teachers and wellbeing staff
	 Attitudinal factors  Demographic factors	Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral information from previous schools, classroom teachers, wellbeing staff or other agencies Documented outcomes of a student referral meeting
 Family	 Attitudinal factors	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access information from the annual Victorian Department of Education 'Attitudes to School' survey
	 Demographic factors  Educational support		
 School	 School environment		

These are selected examples from 10 Victorian case study schools. This list is not exhaustive and there may be other information that is important for schools to collect based on their particular context. Schools should decide which information is most important and efficient for them to collect with respect to student engagement and disengagement.

Access case study school summaries at www.bastow.vic.edu.au/learning-resources/publications

Process to identify and intervene for students at risk of disengagement

FISO improvement cycle



Enablers for identification and intervention processes

Identification

Intervention

Enabling condition



Use of a student information management system and tools to collate, analyse and continuously monitor data



School leadership and culture that prioritises student inclusion and engagement



Positive and interactive relationships with families and community members



School staff who are able to understand and connect with at-risk students



Primary to secondary school transition programs that enable communication between primary and secondary schools



Access to specialist support staff, school-based wellbeing teams or external agencies

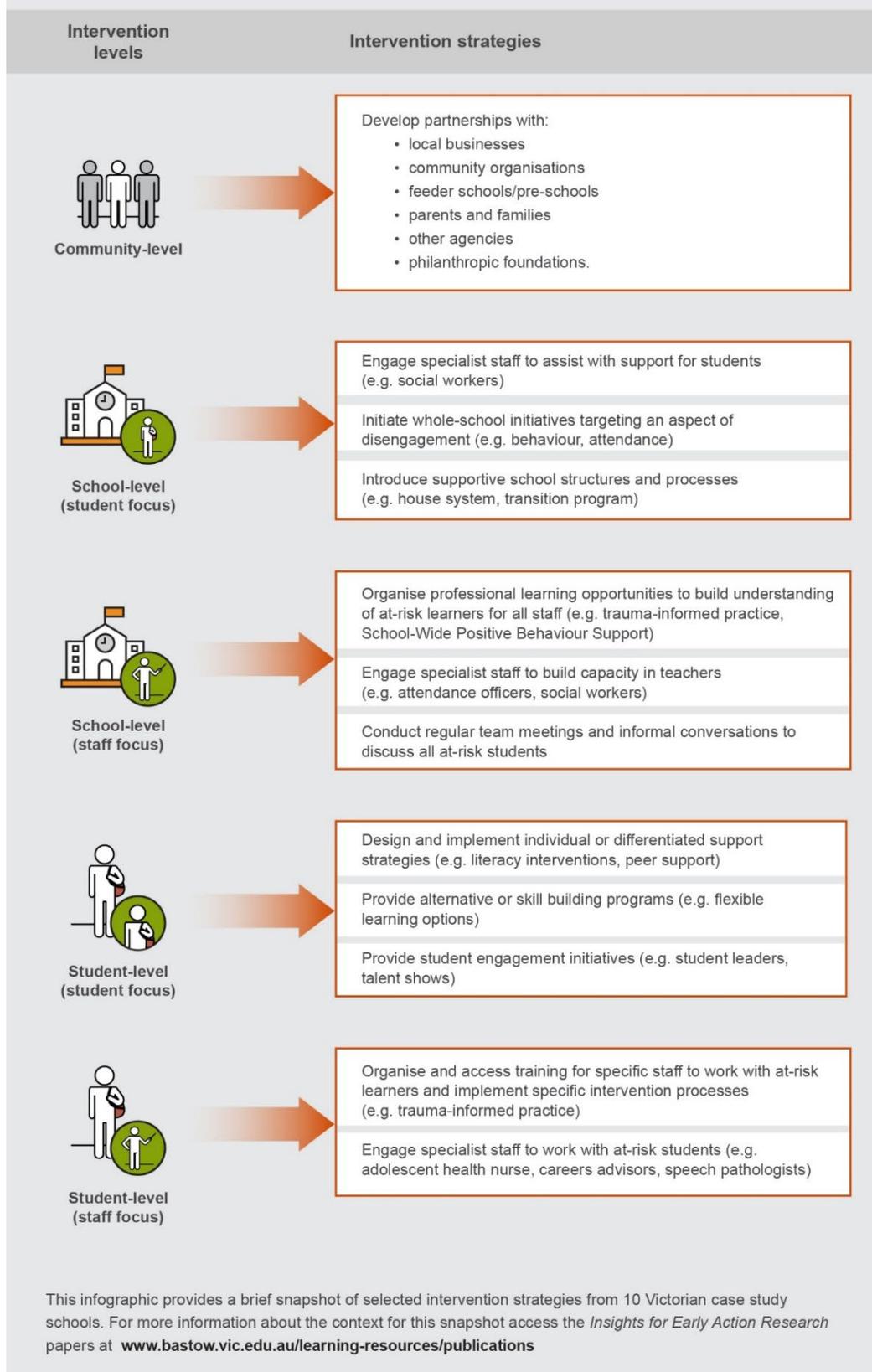


High-quality professional development in related skills (e.g. trauma-informed practice, data literacy, school-wide positive behaviour support)



Intervention strategies for students at risk of disengagement

Examples from 10 Victorian case study schools





Supporting resources

Full details of the research and case study examples are located in the *Insights for Early Action* paper found on the Bastow website, along with the detailed literature review. The paper contains further links to Department resources you can access to maximise student engagement.