

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE — INCENTIVES

**635. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Education:**

My question is on the importance of regular school attendance for educational outcomes. Could the minister update the house —

**Mr A.P. O’Gorman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** If the member for Joondalup wishes to ask a question, he can stand and I will give him the call. I formally call him to order for the first time today.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Could the minister update the house about incentives being used to encourage young people who have less than adequate attendance records to come to school regularly?

**Dr E. CONSTABLE** replied:

Members will remember that in August 2009 the Auditor General delivered a report called “Every Day Counts”, which was about school attendance. One of the recommendations in that was to provide a program to encourage school attendance, and also an advertising program, which was put into place a couple of months ago. The program is entitled by the department “It All Starts at School”. One of the things the department did before it put this program in place was to go and talk to young people. The result of that discussion with students was that, rather than having negatives and punishment attached to non-attendance, it saw that incentives and rewards for attendance would be worthwhile. That is part of the program that has been put in place. We saw a fantastic example of that last week when seven students from Yule Brook College, Balga Senior High School and Gilmore College met with members of the Eagles before they left for the match on Saturday in Melbourne. The Eagles, the Dockers and a number of other organisations, including Nova radio station, have come on board to provide special incentives and rewards for young people who have been selected by their principals and other staff for having improved their attendance. The reward for those students was to meet with some of the Eagles before they went to their finals match on Saturday, and also to tour the club and receive signed footballs. This is a very good example of the sorts of incentives and rewards for young people in this program when they improve their attendance at school. I am told that the principals of participating schools have already seen great improvement in many of their students, and this will be studied and reported on in a systematic way later in the year, after it has been running for some time.

There is also another program that is supported through the department, and that is the school passport system. It is an incentive-based program that has been developed by the Community Development Foundation, which is run by Barry Cable and Jenny Day. The Community Development Foundation website indicates that there are 63 WA schools involved in the program, and it has two primary objectives. One is to involve parents and carers more in their children’s education; the other is to increase regular attendance. What happens is that parents, carers and students earn points through their involvement in the school in various ways, and students earn points for attendance. The activities the parents are encouraged to go to include teacher–parent meetings, volunteering in the canteen, and generally being involved in the school. Students get 10 points for every day they are at school on time. These passport points can be redeemed in a number of ways; they can help pay for excursions, items of school uniform, food and drink in the canteen, school bags and other things to do with attending school.

I was recently at Mullewa District High School, which has had a number of attendance issues. That school has recently come on board with the school passport program. The idea is to send a positive message to parents and students, and through incentives we are seeing an increase in attendance, which we will hopefully document by the end of the year.