



Addressing the decline in sport participation in secondary schools

ENGAGING DISENGAGED STUDENTS

In secondary school, many students disengage from sport. However playing sport offers many benefits for youth aged 13 to 17, and supports an active and healthy adulthood. The Australian Sports Commission sought to identify what interventions engage and motivate young people to continue participating in sport and physical activity.

Which students are most likely to be disengaged?

They are likely to be:

- > female
- > older
- > culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD).

Their biggest motivations for participating in sport are:

- > to improve their skills and fitness for a healthier, more energetic life
- > to spend time with friends whilst having fun.

Disengaged students can be grouped into four distinct cohorts

COHORT 1	COHORT 2	COHORT 3	COHORT 4
<p>Students who would like to participate in sport but are unable to due to environmental barriers</p>	<p>Long-term disengaged students who do not currently participate in sport because they have never connected with sport</p>	<p>Students who participate (are present) but do not engage i.e. stand around talking, sit on sidelines</p>	<p>Students who have dropped out of sport i.e. who do not choose it as an elective</p>
<p>BARRIERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lack of experienced sport teachers, sport culture, facilities or equipment in school > Travel distance for deliverers or students in community > Family support for sport fees and transport 	<p>BARRIERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lack of interest, confidence, fitness, skill or motivation for sport > Family prioritising academic ability; not supporting girls' sport participation > Social norms of gender appropriate sports; peer pressure 	<p>BARRIERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lack of skill, fitness, motivation, confidence, interest; doesn't value sport; feeling self-conscious > Cultural practices that prevent mixing genders > Repetitive or unorganised activities; inexperienced deliverers 	<p>BARRIERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Time pressures i.e. employment, academic, socialising > Sport is too competitive and is a large commitment > Females affected by gender stereotypes and social norms > Injured through sport; finding it challenging to return
<p>MOTIVATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > An interest or hobby > Be active > Learn new skills > Social connection 	<p>MOTIVATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Try alternative sports > Spend time with friends > Improve their fitness level and live a healthier lifestyle (after psychological barriers are overcome) 	<p>MOTIVATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Try a new sport where all students have a low skill level > Spend time with friends > Improve their fitness level 	<p>MOTIVATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Keep up their fitness and skills > The challenge of competition without the commitment and intensity > Stress relief

Strategies that teachers and sport deliverers can draw upon to engage disengaged secondary school students

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Allow students to nominate and participate with friends	Hold programs during the school day, scheduled during class time	1 session per week minimum, with a total of 5-8 sessions	Session lengths of 50-70 minutes 
Deliverer-to-student ratio of 1:15 for low skilled groups	Equipment-to-student ratio of 1:1 	Define optimum activity and group sizes and stick to it, or plan adapted activities	Use more body language and less verbal commands with CALD students

PROGRAM DELIVERER

Top deliverer skill #1: Ability to engage and control a large group of students	Top deliverer skill #2: Specific sport knowledge	Students like a confident, knowledgeable, engaging, attentive, energetic and enthusiastic deliverer	Support peer-to-peer learning 
Be punctual, organised, and communicate session aims 	Have a male and female deliverer if the student cohort is mixed gender	Physically demonstrate skills and activities	Teacher presence can bring control, respect and discipline for students
Ensure the program is realistic to the skill level of the students	Visually display links to well-known (elite) sport brands on merchandise or uniforms	Have a rigorous recruitment process for sport deliverer workforce	Consider innovative workforce sources i.e. chaplains, club coaches, personal trainers

PROGRAM DESIGN

Use the initial activity to build rapport, student confidence and assess student skill	Use a fun game-based format, not drills	Use a game sense approach	Try modified games or modified versions of sports
Provide clear instructions of rules, skills and techniques	Match level of physical exertion to student capabilities	Minimise idle time between activities	Empower students to choose their sport/activities
Give shorter time for basic skills and circuits; longer time for free-flowing games	Program flexible activities that can adapt to diverse student groups	Moderate competition, ensuring it is inclusive	Use single-gender groups 
Group students by skill level	Utilise team activities 	Use several diverse contact points to recruit students to programs	Develop a strong sport culture in the school

PROGRAM FEATURES

Gym programs can build confidence for sport 	Bridging and wellness programs can build strength and body confidence	Try fitness and stress relief programs to provide physical/mental wellbeing 	Allow students to play and choose music for fun or as a reward
Beat the weather by planning modified activities for the classroom	Use technology i.e. pedometers, to measure individual and group improvement	Don't be afraid to include contact in sport - students prefer it	Inject novelty, i.e. gala days, to excite and motivate students