



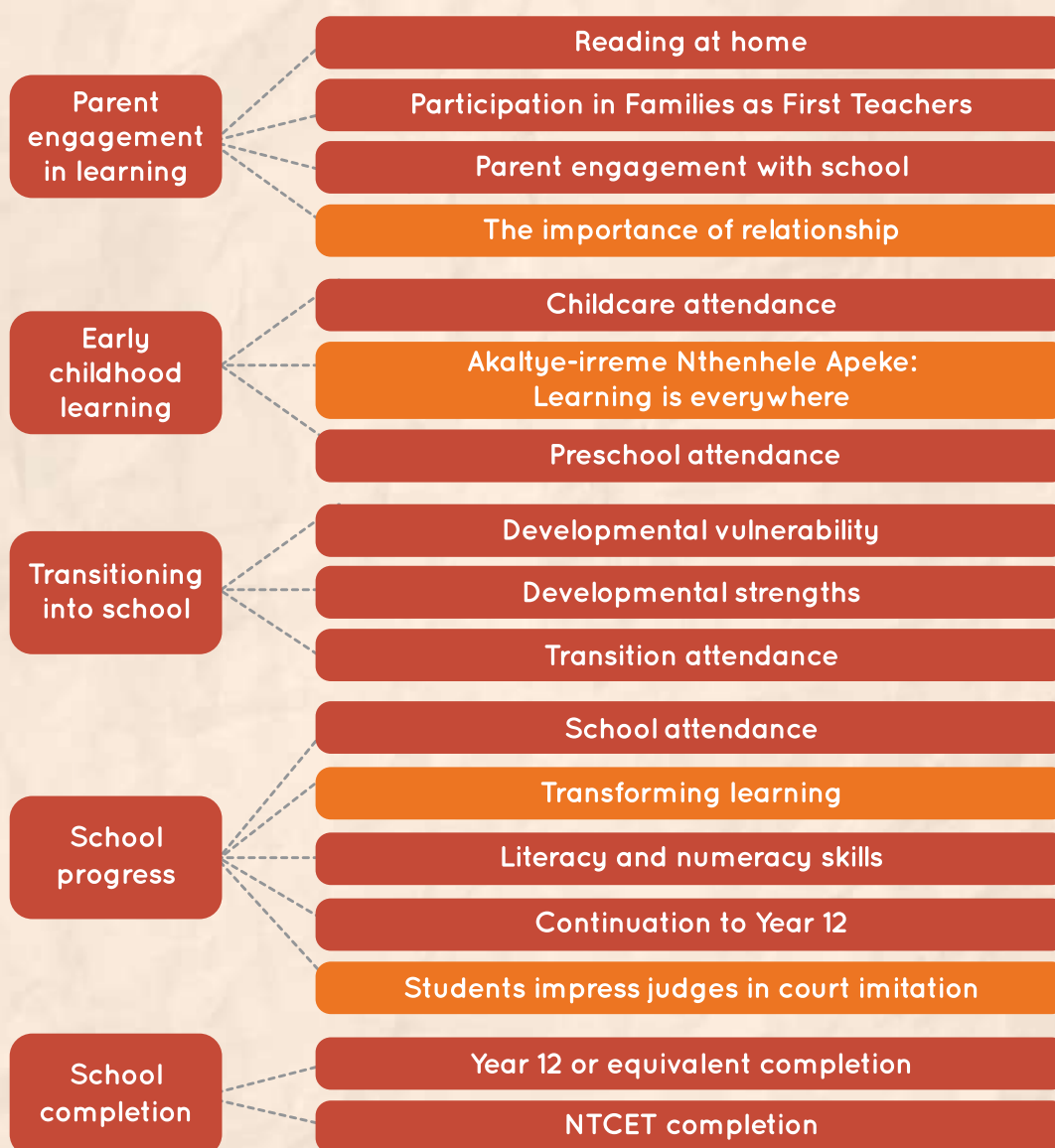
Domain 4

Learning

It is important for children and young people to be continually learning in both formal and informal ways. Children can learn at home with family, through interaction with the wider community and in formal settings, such as school.

Early education and participation, continual learning, emotional wellbeing and inclusion, and educational achievement are all important for successful progression through life. Active learning and school completion are important in supporting young people leaving school to achieve their goals and have a variety of future opportunities. While the indicators reported in this chapter are focused on formal learning, learning is not just about study at school, it is about all the experiences in the life of a child and young person.

In this domain, five outcomes of parent engagement in learning, early childhood learning, transitioning into school, school progress and school completion, are explored through 13 indicators and four case studies:



Indicators Case studies

4.1 Parent engagement in learning

The involvement of parents in their child's education is one of the most important factors in the success of a child at school.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Parent involvement can take many forms, from reading to a child at home, to paying for private music lessons outside of school, to ensuring the quality of education provided by a school.

4.1.1 Reading at home

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a nationwide data collection that shows how young children have developed as they commence their first year of full-time school. The results are derived from a teacher-completed instrument (or survey) for students, in each school, but are to be understood on a population level.⁽⁴⁵⁾ A teacher completes the instrument based on their knowledge and observations of the children in their class. Censuses have been undertaken every three years from 2009 to 2018. AEDC data is also used in sections 4.1.3, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

Preparing children for school is heavily influenced by parents. In 2018, ARACY found 8 in 10 parents read a book or told a story to their children under two years of age, every week. Reading to children and supporting them to read at home from a young age can assist with the development of reading and cognitive skills.⁽⁴⁶⁾ In the AEDC, teachers were asked, based on their knowledge of the child: 'Would you say this child is regularly read to/encouraged in his/her reading at home?'

Proportion (%) of children who are regularly read to or encouraged to read at home



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), prepared by Australian Department of Education and Training (special table), 2018.

Note: Results include teachers' responses of 'Somewhat true' or 'Very true'.

There is substantial variation in the results across the NT. In Greater Darwin, more than 9 in 10 children are regularly read to or encouraged to read at home, which is similar to the proportion of children across Australia. In other areas, this proportion is less than 5 in 10 children in Top End (44.8%) and about 3 in 10 children in Barkly (31.9%).



4.1.2 Participation in Families as First Teachers

The Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program is an early childhood and family support program, primarily for Aboriginal families in remote communities. The aim of the program is to improve developmental outcomes for children, aged 0-4, by working with families and children prior to school entry. The program activities have an emphasis on both child and adult learning, an approach described as dual generational. Components of the program include adult-child interactions in learning; reading and learning games; health and nutrition; and connecting families with other support services.

Participation in Families as First Teachers Program

	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL
Number of communities	na	39	4	8	8	9	6	4
Number of children	na	2,633	601	407	459	696	304	166
Average days for children	na	19.0	11.9	25.4	29.4	16.3	15.6	17.0

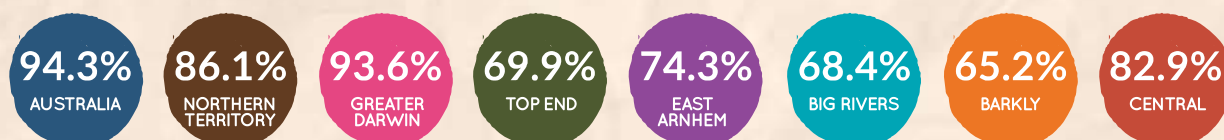
Data source and year: Family as First Teachers (FaFT) program, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.
Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Average days calculated using the weighted average for schools.

In 2018, the FaFT program was available in 39 communities across the NT. A total of 2,633 children participated in the program with the average number of 19.0 days of participation in 2018. Average number of days of participation ranged from 29.4 and 25.4 in East Arnhem and Top End respectively, to 11.9 in Greater Darwin.

4.1.3 Parent engagement with school

Active engagement of parents or caregivers at school assists transition of the child into school and reinforces the value of school learning for the child. Similar to section 4.1.1, this measure was also assessed using AEDC results, with teachers asked to respond to the question 'Would you say this child has parent(s)/caregiver(s) who are actively engaged with the school in supporting their child's learning?'


Proportion (%) of children whose parents or caregivers are actively engaged with the school in supporting their child's learning



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), prepared by Australian Department of Education and Training (special table), 2018.
Note: Results include teachers' responses of 'Somewhat true' or 'Very true'.

The results for this measure demonstrate an overall greater engagement of parents and caregivers at school than the measure of support for reading at home (see 4.1.1). Across the NT the level of parent and caregiver engagement ranged from about 7 in 10 children in several regions to more than 9 in 10 children in Greater Darwin.





'I do reading and learning games with my daughter. She is learning herself now'

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

In early 2018, the Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program in Elliott was struggling with a low participation rate and relationships with community members were not strong. The team made the decision to close the program for six months to plan a fresh start. A new Family Educator and Family Liaison Officer were employed to build strong relationships and re-engage families and the community in early childhood learning and development.

The stronger FaFT team built relationships with families by visiting homes, hosting events and being approachable and supportive. They liaised with local and regional stakeholders and services to ensure families and children are exposed to a wide range of activities, support and information. They transformed the FaFT environment into a welcoming, engaging and supportive early learning space. These changes have had a demonstrated result, with participation in FaFT increasing from 48% of Elliott children in Term 1, 2018 to 89% in Term 1, 2019.

'I like going to the FaFT, it feels safe there, people to help if I need help', Karen Cooper says. Parents enjoy the range of place-based programs that promote optimal child development, family engagement in early learning and family support. 'I do reading and learning games with my daughter. It is better for her, she'll know everything when she goes to preschool. She is learning herself now'.

Photo: Jason and Karen with their daughter Amy during a Learning on Country Early Years Transitioning Excursion to the local waterhole

4.2 Early childhood learning

Participation and engagement in learning from a young age is essential for children. A child's early learning is shaped by their health, environment, parents, families, play groups and childcare. Quality early childhood education and care plays a crucial role in a child's development.

4.2.1 Childcare attendance

Good quality learning before school, which includes play-based learning and intentional teaching, is widely recognised to have an important role in preparing a child for school. Childcare services are defined as services for children aged 0-12, which can include long day care, family day care, outside school hours care, occasional care and other types of care.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Among the various types of childcare only some are formally regulated and 'approved' by government.

Proportion (%) of children, aged 0-5, attending approved childcare services



Data source and year: Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2019, 2018.

Note: (na) not available.

In 2017, less than 3 in 10 NT children (28%), aged 0-5 years, attended approved childcare services, which was less than the reported proportion of 4 in 10 children for all Australian children (43.2%).





AKALTYE IRREME NTHENHELE APEKE: LEARNING IS EVERYWHERE

'I have over 20 grandkids between six months and 10 years old. Twelve of them have been coming to our early learning activities at Children's Ground since we started it in 2016. None of my grandkids had been to early learning before and some of the older ones have struggled at school where they feel like they have to leave their language and culture at the door.

At Children's Ground, we take them out on their country and show them their place and ancestors, so they know who they are. They are learning from us, their family, and western educators too. We are teaching them in Arrernte and English. When they have their culture and identity with them all day, they are more confident to learn.

All the kids got into the routine from the start. They call it their school. They are learning so much: starting to learn to read, write and speak in Arrernte and in English, learning about their language, land and culture and about their health too. These little kids know more than my older kids do because being on country is important. Everything comes from the land - it's their identity. Being strong in who they are gives them confidence to learn. My older kids and grandkids didn't have the chance to learn like these little kids.

We have over 100 little ones coming to early learning with us. Every year more and more kids and families are coming because they can see their culture and their family respected and valued'.

Lorrayne Gorey, Senior Arrernte Educator and Leader at Children's Ground

Photo: Lorrayne reading with some of her grandkids



4.2.2 Preschool attendance

Preschool programs are a strategy for strengthening social, emotional and cognitive development of children in their early years. Preschool services are defined as services which deliver 'a structured, play-based learning program, delivered by a qualified teacher, aimed at children in the year or two before they commence full time schooling'.⁽⁴⁷⁾ They differ to other forms of early education in that preschool has minimum hours of attendance per week and focused activities.⁽⁴⁸⁾

At three and four years old a child's brain is growing rapidly and children are undergoing skill development processes such as learning communication and self-regulation.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Studies from the UK, Europe and the US have found children who attended two or more years of preschool, when compared to those who attended less, had better development in language, number concepts, sociability and independence at the start of school, and higher Year 12 grades in English and Maths.⁽⁴⁸⁾ This highlights the long-term impact of preschool years on a child.

Unlike the majority of preschools in Australia, most in the Northern Territory are delivered through schools and are free to attend. Preschools provide a minimum of 15 hours a week for 40 weeks per year, on average, or 600 hours per year.

Proportion (%) of children, aged 4, attending a preschool program



Data source and year: ABS 4240.0 - Preschool Education 2018, Table 3, 2018; proportions estimated using ABS 3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2018.
Note: (na) not available.

In 2018, about 8 in 10 NT children, aged four years (79.3%), attended a preschool program, which is similar to the proportion for all Australian children of this age (84.3%).

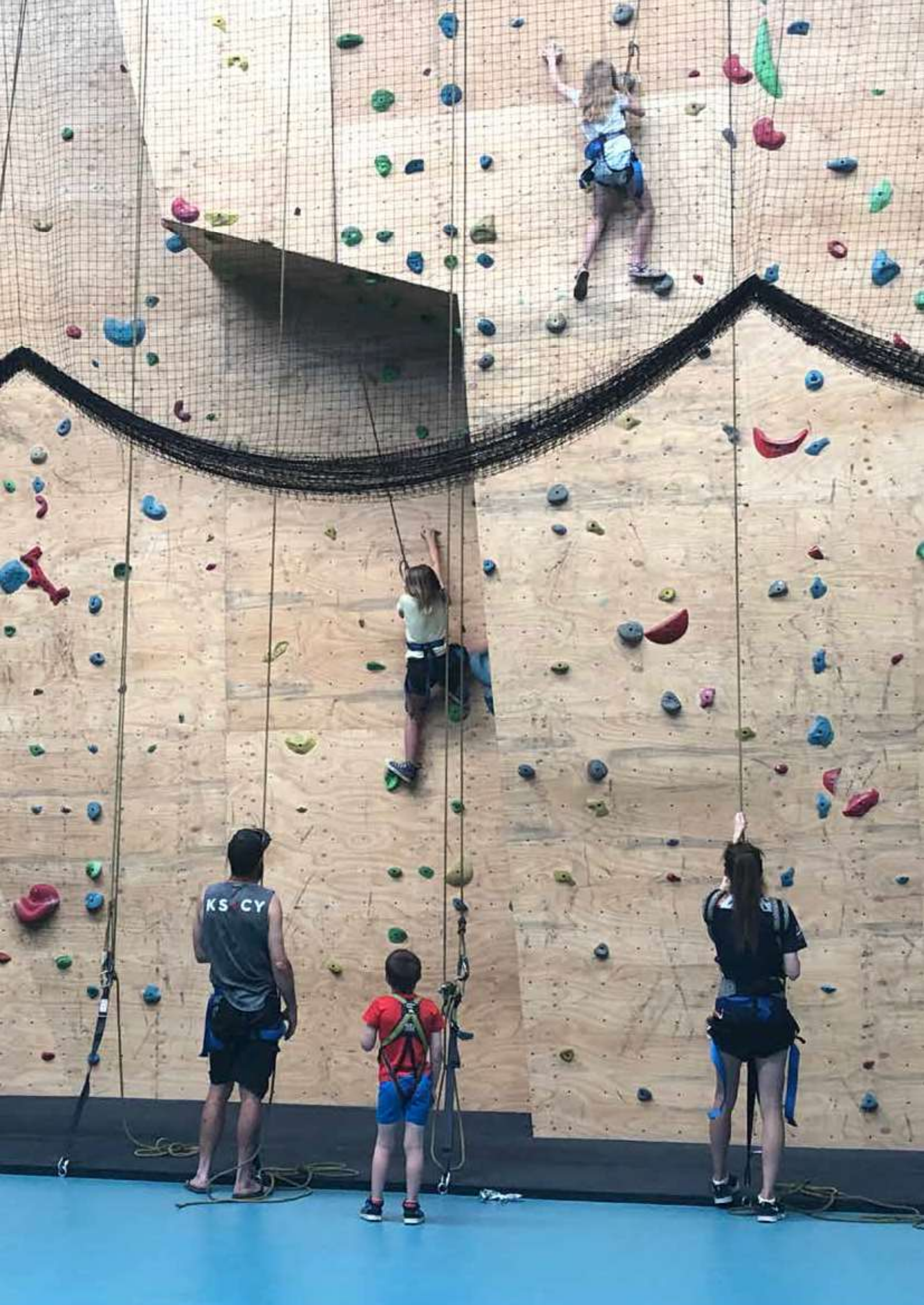
Average hours of preschool attendance for children, aged 3 or 4, NT Government schools



Data source and year: NT Department of Education (special table) 2018.
Note: (na) not available.

Among those children enrolled in NT Government preschools, there was variation in the average hours of preschool attendance for children aged three or four, from 7 hours in Barkly to 14 hours in Greater Darwin.





4.3 Transitioning into school

Transitioning into school can be a difficult time for children and families, with a change in environment for children and an increase in learning demands. However, shifting from home and playgroups, to formal school settings is an important time for children and families. Research has found that successful transitioning into school can help establish a foundation for positive interactions at school, and educational and social outcomes now and into the future. Effective transitioning is more than just learning about the school and a new environment, and involves processes that start before school and continue through a child's time at school.⁽⁴⁹⁾

4.3.1 Developmental vulnerability

The AEDC measures early development of children across five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school based), and communication skills and general knowledge.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Children with a score in the lowest 10% of the national population in a domain are considered to be 'developmentally vulnerable' in that domain. The measure of 'developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains' or 'two or more domains' are summary indicators of children's readiness for school. To determine which children fall into these groupings, AEDC cut-offs have been set for each domain based on all children who participated in the AEDC nationally in 2009 – the national AEDC population. The 2009 cut-off points apply to all future data collections.

In the following tables these measures are presented as the percentage of children in a region who have at least one (or two) or more AEDC domain score/s below the 10th percentile.

Proportion (%) of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains



Proportion (%) of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), prepared by Australian Department of Education and Training (special table), 2018.

In the NT, in 2018, almost 1 in 4 children (23.4%) were vulnerable in two or more domains which is much greater than 1 in 9 children across Australia (11.0%). Across the NT, children who were developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains varied from 1 in 7 in Greater Darwin (14.3%) to 1 in 2 in the Top End (56.0%) and Barkly (53.8%).



4.3.2 Developmental strengths

The Multiple Strengths Indicator (MSI) is a summary indicator that measures developmental strengths in the social and emotional development of children, using the data collected from the AEDC. It measures developmental strengths such as self-control, pro-social skills, respectful behaviour towards peers, teachers and property, and curiosity about the world. The indicator also identifies children who have advanced skills in literacy, a particular interest in reading, numeracy and memory, and very good communication skills. MSI differs to the AEDC summary indicators provided in section 6.2.1, as it measures developmental strengths.

The data presented below shows the proportion of children who have either highly developed, well developed or emerging strengths. Highly developed children are those with strengths in 28-39 of the multiple strength indicator items of the census, well developed are those with 19-27 strengths, and emerging strengths children are those with 18 or less.

Proportion (%) of children assessed as having highly developed, well developed and emerging strengths using Multiple Strengths Indicator

	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL
Highly developed strengths	57.5%	43.8%	50.9%	15.1%	31.6%	32.5%	21.5%	44.1%
Well developed strengths	21.8%	21.6%	22.8%	17.6%	17.5%	19.7%	15.1%	22.1%
Emerging strengths	20.6%	34.6%	26.3%	67.3%	50.9%	47.8%	63.4%	33.8%

Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), prepared by Australian Department of Education and Training (special table), 2018.

Across the NT, there are varying distributions of children who have highly developed, well developed or emerging strengths. There is a significant proportion of children in all regions with highly developed strengths.

4.3.3 Transition attendance

In the Northern Territory, Transition classes are offered at primary school for children aged five before commencing Year 1 at age six. The Northern Territory Government has a focus on ensuring children successfully transition into school.⁽⁵⁰⁾

School attendance in Transition, NT Government schools



Data source and year: NT: NT Department of Education website, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education, Enrolment and Attendance data, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.

Note: (na) not available.

In 2018, attendance in Transition class was highest in Greater Darwin, with attendance of almost 9 in 10 available days (89.3%). In some regions, average school attendance in Transition was less than 6 in 10 days.



4.4 School progress

Education is linked to the social and economic circumstances of populations. It is important for children to attend and engage in school learning to provide the skills to achieve their goals and take advantage of future opportunities.

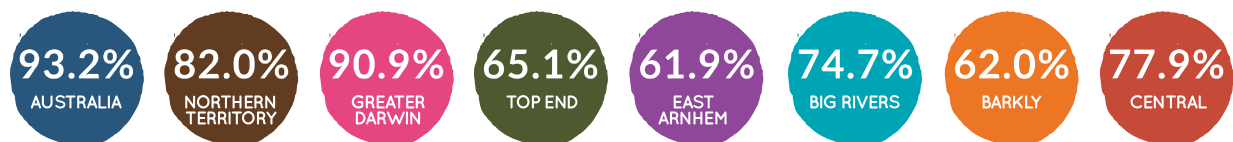
4.4.1 School attendance

Students who attend school regularly are most likely to achieve good educational outcomes, progress through school, and increase options for their future. While every day of attendance is important to optimise progress, a school attendance rate of 80% is regarded as a threshold below which children have difficulty with the continuity of classroom learning. In the Northern Territory, school attendance has been historically low, particularly among remote Aboriginal students.⁽⁵¹⁾ Low school attendance among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is recognised as a national concern and in 2014, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) set a target of 90% attendance to be achieved within five years.⁽⁵²⁾

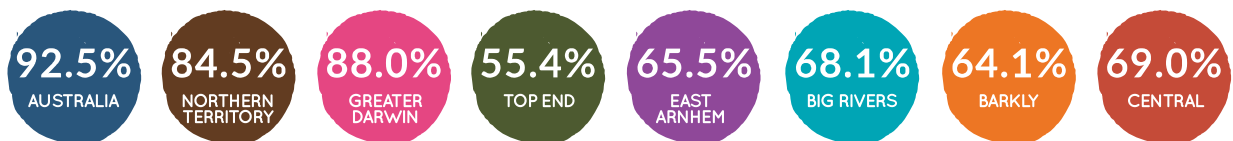
In the Northern Territory, school or an approved alternative education program, such as home schooling, is compulsory for children who turn six on or before 30 June of the school year.⁽⁵³⁾

The rate of school attendance presented here is the proportion of time students attend school as a proportion of the time they are expected to attend school.

School attendance, in Year 3, NT Government schools



School attendance, in Year 7, NT Government schools



Data source and year: Australia: Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, website, 2018. NT: NT Department of Education website, Enrolment and Attendance, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education, Enrolment and Attendance data, prepared by the NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.

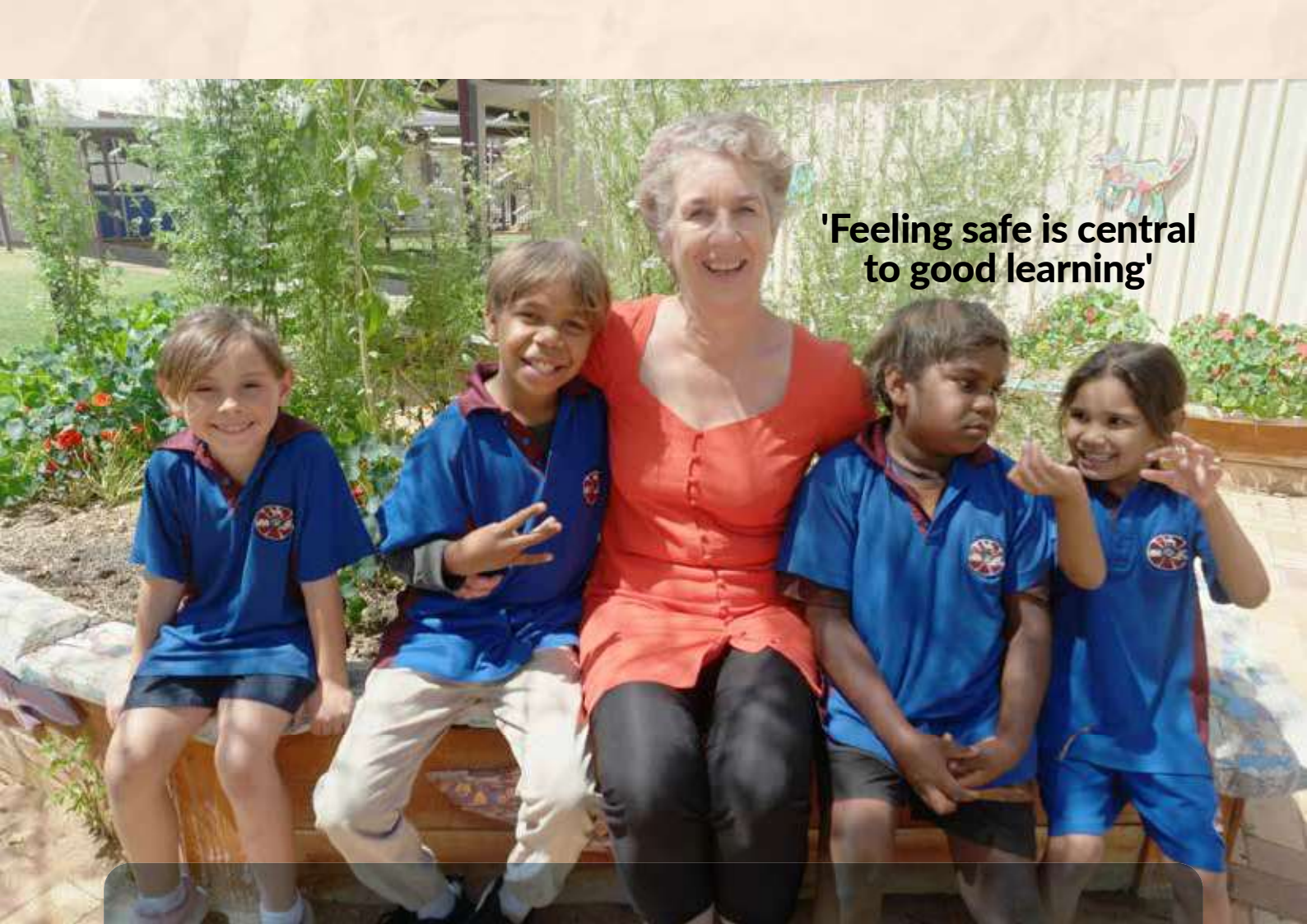
Across the NT, average school attendance varied for primary schools, presented for Year 3, and for secondary schools which is presented for Year 7. In Year 3, average school attendance varied from about 60% for several regions to 90.9% in Greater Darwin. The distribution was similar for Year 7 which ranged from 55.4% attendance for schools in the Top End to 88.0% for schools in Greater Darwin.

Proportion (%) of students with less than 80% school attendance, NT Government schools



Data source and year: NT Department of Education, Enrolment and Attendance data, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.
Note: (na) not available.

In 2018, there was a substantial proportion of children with less than 80% attendance across the NT, with a range from about 2 in 10 children (20.6%) in Greater Darwin to 7 in 10 children in Barkly (73.0%) and the Top End (71.5%).



'Feeling safe is central to good learning'

TRANSFORMING LEARNING

Over the past few years, Sadadeen Primary School in Alice Springs, has focused on embedding trauma informed, child-centred practices into their everyday work. Recognising the barriers to children engaging in school were all too evident, with many students with a background of complex trauma, ongoing intergenerational trauma or precarious living situations, the school saw it needed to approach learning in a new and family centred way.

The school started by developing a strong school vision across all staff levels, to create an aware and emotionally responsive environment, ready to meet the needs of its students. In its planning, the school acknowledged the relationship between learning, belonging, safety, culture and nurturing children. Understanding support for the wellbeing and learning of a child requires positive and effective relationships across all areas of a

child's life, the school partnered with government and non-government services to deliver and embed the trauma informed, family centred practice throughout the school.

Key features of the practice include an understanding that feeling safe is central to good learning; a change in thinking about behaviour to the understanding that all behaviour communicates a need and it is about how you respond appropriately to that need; a belief that the physical environment is important, and playgrounds should be both exciting and relaxing spaces; and a strong commitment to building an inclusive and caring school environment.

After implementing the new approach, Sadadeen Primary saw a decline in behavioural incidents by almost 50 per cent between 2015 and 2017, as well as promising signs of improvement in literacy for children in the early years.

Photo: School Principal Ms Lizzy with students Lowanna, Justin, Johnic and Aaniyah in front of the school gardens

4.4.2 Literacy and numeracy skills

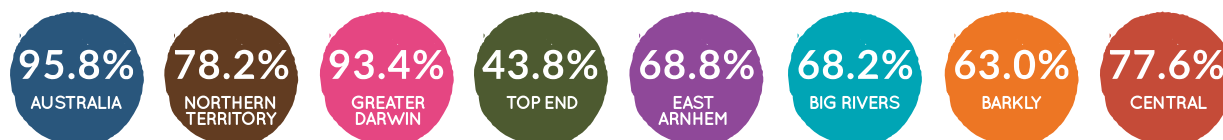
Ongoing progress through school is important to provide the necessary building blocks to have a better quality of life. Competency in reading, writing and numeracy contributes to better opportunities post school and better health, social and wellbeing outcomes. The National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is a nationwide annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The test assesses skills considered essential to progress through school in the domains of reading and writing, language conventions and numeracy.

NAPLAN provides teachers with a snapshot of which students need support in the classroom, as well as providing the Northern Territory Government with information on teaching and learning practices.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The national minimum standard for each domain of the NAPLAN is considered to be the minimum required knowledge for students to progress at school with little difficulty.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Proportion (%) of students in Year 3 reaching the minimum national standard in Literacy, NT Government schools



Proportion (%) of students in Year 3 reaching the minimum national standard in Numeracy, NT Government schools



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ACARA NAPLAN – National Report for 2018, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education (special table), 2018

There is a substantial proportion of NT children in Year 3, aged around eight years, who would benefit from additional support with formal learning. Across Australia, about 1 in 20 children need support, while in the NT this proportion is about 3 in 10 children. There is considerable variation across the NT with about half of all children in some regions who would benefit from additional support in literacy and numeracy.

Proportion (%) of students in Year 7 reaching the minimum national standard in Literacy, NT Government schools



Proportion (%) of students in Year 7 reaching the minimum national standard in Numeracy, NT Government schools



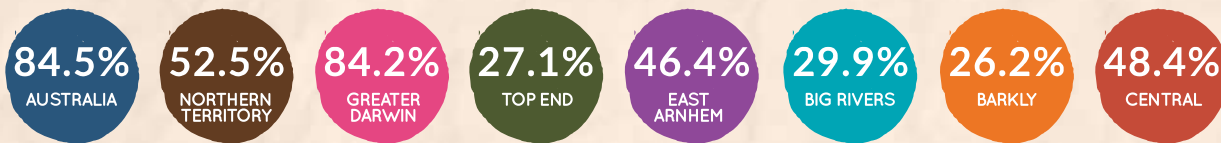
Data source and year: Australia and NT: ACARA NAPLAN – National Report for 2018, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.

For older children in Year 7, aged around 12 years, the proportion of children who would benefit from support in literacy or numeracy (or both) is about 1 in 20 across Australia, while in the NT around 3 in 10 children. Again, there is considerable variation across the NT, with about two thirds of children in Top End and Barkly who would benefit from additional support for literacy and more than half in the Top End who would benefit from support in numeracy.

4.4.3 Continuation to Year 12

The apparent retention rate is a measure of the percentage of young people who were enrolled in Year 7/8 and progressed through to Year 12 in 2018. Year 7/8 is used as a marker of the start of secondary school, which varies between schools throughout Australia.

Apparent retention from Year 7/8 to Year 12



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ABS Schools Capped Apparent Retention Rate 2011-2018, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.

Half of the children in the NT (52.5%) who started Year 7/8 remained in school until Year 12 in 2018. This compares to Australia, where more than 4 in 5 young people (84.5%) continued to Year 12. There is great variation in retention rates across the NT, from more than 8 in 10 young people in Greater Darwin (84.2%) to about 3 in 10 young people in the Top End (27.1%), Big Rivers (29.9%) and Barkly (26.2%).



STUDENTS IMPRESS JUDGES IN COURT IMITATION

Three Year 11 and 12 students from Darwin High School were placed third in the National High School Mooting Competition hosted by Bond University this year. Mooting is a simulated court proceeding in which student teams vie to present a superior legal argument before lawyers who act as judges.

Tricia Ulep, Harvie Stiller-Wojkowski and Samuel Roussos met at lunchtimes, after school and on weekends to dissect the mooting problem, initially unaware if they were to be the respondent or appellant. They spent a lot of time reading and mastering the relevant legislation and the supporting authorities, such as examples of precedence.

After learning the side they were required to argue, the students brainstormed strategies for weeks.

On the day of the competition, the students battled through the elimination rounds to become the only government school in Australia to win a spot in the final. Each speaker had 10 minutes to present an argument opposing that of the contesting counsel. The judges were entitled to interrupt the teams to ask questions and raise points for clarification. The mooting teams were scored on their presentations (35%) content (35%) and their proficiency in handling the judges' questions (30%). Samuel also won the Outstanding Advocate Award.

Photo: Tricia, Harvie and Samuel (from left to right) ready for action

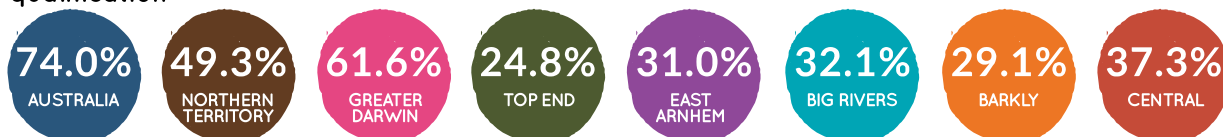
4.5 School completion

The amount of education a young person receives has an impact on their future job opportunities and income. Numerous studies have found those with higher educational attainment are not only more likely to be employed full time, but also to have higher income, and have greater productivity in the workforce. In 2010, the Productivity Commission estimated the average gain in earnings for those who completed Year 12, compared to non-completers, was 13% and 10% for males and females respectively.⁽⁵⁶⁾

4.5.1 Year 12 or equivalent completion

Year 12 or equivalent completion is considered a key measure of educational attainment by young Australians. An equivalent qualification to Year 12 is a Certificate III or higher achievement. Variations in Year 12 completion are due to factors which include rurality or remoteness, gender and language background.

Proportion (%) of all young people, aged 20-24, who have attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016.

In 2016, across Australia about 3 in 4 young adults (74%), aged 20-24 years, had completed a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, compared with 1 in 2 NT adults (49.3%) of the same age.

4.5.2 NTCET completion

The Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) is the final school qualification for students in the Northern Territory. Achieving the NTCET indicates students have completed senior secondary school requirements. The NTCET has been running for eight years, and offers graduates the opportunity to enter a range of tertiary education streams.

Proportion (%) of enrolled students who completed NTCET



Data source and year: NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.
Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. (nr) not reportable because of small numbers.

In 2018, a total of 1,373 students completed the NTCET, of whom 197 identified as Aboriginal students. There was a high rate of completion across all regions, with more than 9 in 10 young people completing NTCET among those who intended to complete the NTCET.

