Hands on Learning

An Independent Analysis of Hands on Learning - 2021

This project was funded through the generosity of the PMF Foundation, who are valued supporters of Hands on Learning.

January 2022

dandolopartners

Save the Children Australia

PMF FOUNDATION

HANDS ON LEARNING

Background

Save the Children engaged dandolo to assemble the evidence of impact for the Hands on Learning program.

Background to the work

Hands on Learning is an innovative program, run by Save the Children, that is trying to engage students in school that builds wellbeing, engagement, and attendance by creating opportunities for students to discover their talents through hands-on projects.

Hands on Learning is currently at a fork in the road in terms of its growth. It has the opportunity to significantly scale up its footprint and grow its impact, but needs to secure additional funders to enable this.

dandolopartners (dandolo) has been engaged by Save the Children to articulate the program's evidence of impact and support them to make a compelling pitch for scale and funding.

This evidence of impact includes:

- An external case for support that can be used with government and philanthropic funders and/or as a marketing tool to articulate your impact
- Return on investment methodology
- Data analysis methodology
- Case studies of six Hands on Learning schools
- Advice to Hands on Learning on measuring their impact

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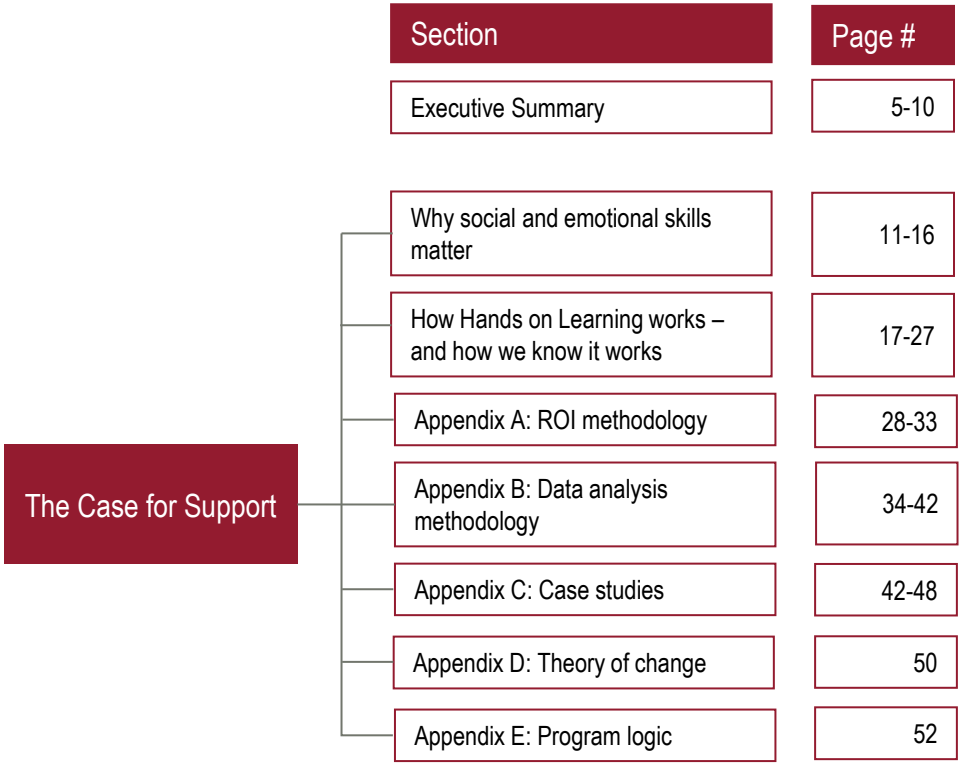
This document



Methodology

We used a range of qualitative and quantitative research techniques to build our understanding of how Hands on Learning works, the impact it has and opportunities to strengthen its impact over time.

Defining the problem

We undertook desktop research and five interviews with experts in school-based approaches to belonging, engagement and wellbeing.

This helped validate the evidence underpinning Hands on Learning, the nature of 'the problem' the program is solving, and the theory of change.

Aligning with best practice

An expert advisor conducted a literature review of what works to address the issue of student disengagement from school.

The literature review outlined good practice in school-based programs focused on preventing disengagement and the alignment of Hands on Learning with that evidence-base.

Articulating the economic case

We undertook a fit-for-purpose economic analysis that considered the cost of delivery of Hands on Learning and the potential economic benefits of select program outcomes.

This allowed us to calculate the thresholds for breaking even and delivering a positive return on investment.

Evidence of impact

We reviewed Hands on Learning's existing data and re-analysed the pre-post data on student outcomes, parent surveys and school data. We also undertook deep-dive case studies of six schools' experience to supplement existing evidence.

The aim was to bring together the existing data and evidence on the impact of Hands on Learning and present it in ways that are credible and compelling.

Strengthening monitoring of impact

We undertook an assessment of existing approaches to data collection and considered a range of validated instruments that could provide evidence-based measures of Hands on Learning's key outcomes.

The aim was establish a stronger foundation for future measurement.

Key findings and observations

Hands on Learning meets a clear need for schools and students

The needs of students and schools

There is a cohort of students whose needs are not being met in traditional classrooms. These students have often not experienced success at school and have low confidence in themselves as learners. They frequently demonstrate challenging behaviours and are more likely to disengage from school early.

Often, these students are also experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and may also grapple with mental health, trauma and/or complex home environments.

Many schools are struggling to meet the needs of these students. They can find it difficult to provide the kinds of learning environments that give them an opportunity to engage meaningfully, experience success, and provide the kind of intensive, relationship-based support they need to thrive.

The design of Hands on Learning

Our review of Hands on Learning indicates that it is carefully and intentionally designed to meet the needs of these students. The model provides schools with the structures and support they need to implement a different model of learning.

Hands on Learning has been operating for over 20 years and has continually refined, adapted and grown the model over that time.

It is grounded in evidence and demonstrates a commitment to measuring impact

Alignment with the evidence base

There is a strong alignment between the design of Hands on Learning and the evidence-base on effective strategies for promoting student engagement, confirmed by a review by Prof. Lucas Walsh at the Monash University Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice.

Key features of the Hands on Learning model include

- The range of mutually reinforcing strategies used to:
  - **Promote a sense of belonging** with peers and at school, particularly the low adult-student ratio.
  - Support students **motivation and confidence for learning**, particularly the focus on practical projects that foster responsibility.
- The explicit focus on teaching and building on **social and emotional skills**, using reflective practice, Focus Plans, and self and peer feedback.
- The provision of **ongoing implementation support**, professional learning and quality improvement.

Experts consulted for this project also noted two additional features that make the program unique:

That Hands on Learning is embedded within mainstream schooling, maintains the connection with the classroom and models alternative ways of working with a cohort of students that schools often experience as challenging.

The focus on service learning, so that students have the opportunity to experience giving back to community and being respected by adults outside of their family or school.

Hands on Learning appears to be making a material difference to students and schools

Commitment to measuring impact

Hands on Learning show a strong organisational commitment to collecting data and understanding their impact. Data collection about program inputs and student outcomes is routinely embedded in their practice, and they regularly review and seek to improve the strength of that data.

Impact of Hands on Learning

We have not conducted a comprehensive independent evaluation of Hands on Learning. However, our review of the program design, our analysis of the monitoring data collected routinely, and our interviews of case study schools, indicate there is good reason to believe the program is **soundly based** and is making material difference to students and schools.

Our analysis of the cost-benefit ratios for Hands on Learning indicates there is very low threshold for investment in the program to break even and to deliver a positive return on investment. If only 1.1% of their annual cohort finish school when they wouldn't have otherwise, they break even.

Hands on Learning are well placed to build on these strong foundations, particularly through growing their understanding of the relationship between implementation fidelity and impact, and to continue growing the strength of their evidence of impact.

Hands on Learning

The case for support

dandolopartners

Introduction to Hands on Learning - Overview

Hands on Learning is an established, effective and well managed program delivering positive outcomes for students.

Hands on Learning was established over 20 years ago to provide practical and engaging education opportunities for students who are disengaged from learning.

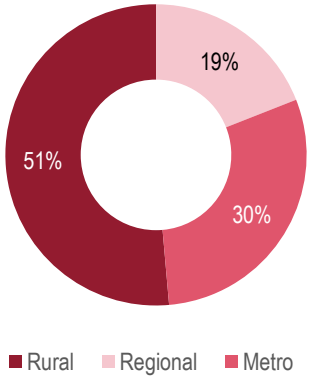
Hands on Learning is an established and mature program with a strong track record of delivering positive outcomes for students. They currently operate in more than 120 schools. 73% are secondary schools and 27% are primary schools.

In 2017, Hands on Learning became part of Save the Children Australia (SCA).

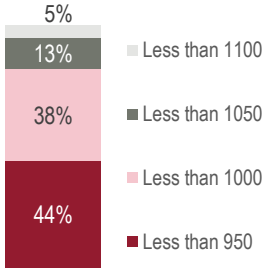
Hands on learning operates across four states. Two thirds of participating schools are considered rural or regional, and the majority are in the lowest socio-economic areas of the country.

National footprint

Regional footprint



Socio-economic footprint (ICSEA rating*)

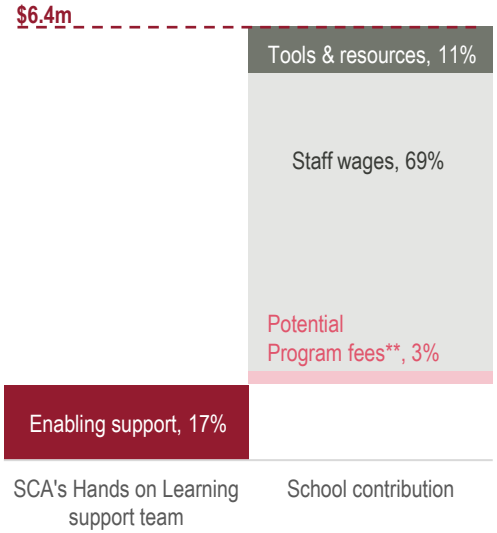


Hands on Learning is an efficient program, costing around $3700 per student, per year.

The $6.4m cost of delivery is shared between the SCA Hands on Learning Support team and schools.

Schools could contribute ~83% of the cost of program delivery.

SCA's Hands on Learning support costs are ~17% and this covers support for implementation, training and quality improvement.



Funding to SCA for Hands on Learning largely comes from philanthropy

The costs for the SCA Hands on Learning support team for delivery in both Primary and Secondary schools is ~$1.1m per annum.

- In reality, income from school program fees contribute much less than 15% given only a small portion of schools paid program fees in 2020.
- For 2020, program fees made up ~0.5% of Hands on Learning income.
- In 2020, over 95% of SCAs funding for Hands on Learning came from philanthropic foundations, trusts, corporate partners, and individual donors

Sources:
dandolo data analysis of Hands on Learning student and parent surveys, Save the Children 2020 financial data for HoL.
* ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage), where 1000 is the national average.
** cost per student per year, including the potential program fees IF all schools paid program fees. In 2020 program fees were much smaller than estimated due to only a small percentage of schools being charged program fees.

Why Hands on Learning targets social and emotional skills - Overview

Social and emotional skills are essential for succeeding in school and in life. But some students start behind their peers.

There is a core set of social and emotional skills that shape young people's ability to:

- Build relationships with peers and teachers and feel like they belong at school
- Focus in the classroom, organise and plan their work, and persist in the face of challenge
- Manage their emotions, regulate their behaviour, navigate with disagreement, and get along with others

Self-management

Self-awareness

Responsible decision-making

Relationship skills

Social awareness

Children who experience adversity have fewer opportunities to develop positive social and emotional skills

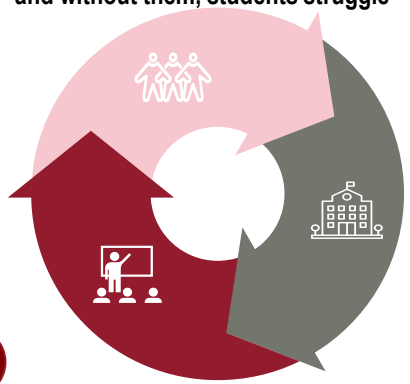
30% of children from low-income areas experience significant social and emotional challenges, compared to 19% of children in high income areas.

20% fewer children growing up in homes with poor family function are on track in their social and emotional development.*

These skills can be learned – but traditional schooling doesn't always provide the right environment or support.

For some students, school is a vicious cycle. They start without the foundational social and emotional skills they need to thrive, don't have the opportunity to learn them, and their struggles in the classroom exacerbate and entrench their challenges.

1 **Social and emotional skills predict success at school and throughout life – and without them, students struggle**



2 **Schools can find it hard to meet the needs of students with social and emotional skill gaps**

3 **Traditional classrooms can intensify the challenges – creating additional stress, reducing confidence, triggering challenging behaviour and reducing belonging and motivation**

Low social and emotional skills are a key contributor to the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students

Young people experiencing disadvantage are more likely to:

- Report low levels of belonging at school
- Demonstrate challenging behaviours
- Be disengaged from learning in the classroom
- Score below the national minimum standard for maths, reading and science

The consequences are significant, long-term and expensive.

For individuals, not finishing school well can have lifelong effects on their prosperity and wellbeing

Young people who do not experience success at school are less likely to go onto further study or work.

Students who do not make a positive transition to work or study after school are less likely to get a good job and have financial security and the benefits that come with it, like a stable home, the security of savings in the bank, and enough money to eat well and participate in the community.

They are more likely to have poor health, contact with the justice system, be socially isolated, and have mental health challenges.

For society, the cost of early school leaving is significant

Each early school leaver costs government and taxpayers at least $335,000 across their lifetime – in lost tax revenue, increased welfare and crime spending, and in health costs.*

For every cohort of early school leavers, government incurs $12 billion in costs across their lives for 18% of students who leave school early before Year 12.*

* Lamb, S. and Huo, S. Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education. Mitchell Institute report No. 02/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. Australia's children. Cat. no. CWS 69. Canberra: AIHW; and [2] Warren, D. and Edwards, B, Contexts of Disadvantage. Australian Institute of Family Studies Occasional Paper No. 53, 2017.

How Hands on Learning works - Overview

Hands on Learning builds the skills that young people need to succeed at school and through life.

Hands on Learning:

A program for students who are not thriving in the classroom

At the start, most Hands on Learning students struggle with one or more of the following:

- Have low or sporadic attendance
- Show challenging behaviour in the classroom
- Are disengaged from learning

A place to belong and people to belong to

Students spend a full day each week in Hands on Learning, for at least two terms

They are part of a small, consistent group of up to 10 students

They are supported by two artisan-teachers who are skilled relationship builders and can be former tradespeople

They have their own dedicated and safe space within the school

Practical projects and a chance to give back

Build

Students work together on practical projects like:

Construction – e.g. building picnic tables for the school, putting up shelving in classrooms, fitting out shipping containers as community spaces

Landscaping – e.g. creating community gardens, landscaping around the school, gardening for elderly community members, growing vegetables

Café

Students work together in a commercial kitchen and:

- Prepare lunch for the school canteen
- Cater for community events
- Participate in Paddock to Plate initiatives – utilising food from school grown gardens

Cultivating social and emotional skills

Each day starts with a Focus Plan with some specific goals such as -

- To focus on the task I've been given
- To ask for help when I get stuck
- To say nice things to other people
- Share my thoughts on how to get a task done

Reflection on their progress is built into the daily routine, as students

- Reflect on their progress and get feedback on their Focus Plans
- Share feedback on the strengths and achievements of others
- Recognise their own achievements

Save the Children's Hands on Learning team provides a clear methodology, structured and ongoing implementation support, professional development and mentoring for artisan-teachers, learning portal with tools and resources and ongoing data collection

Hands on Learning creates the environments and opportunities that evidence shows students need to:

Experience belonging and engagement at school

Students develop positive relationships with their peers and artisan-teachers, enabling them to feel like they belong at school.

They experience success in 'hands on' projects in a way that builds their confidence and helps them see value in school.

Develop strong social and emotional skills

Hands on Learning explicitly cultivates a core and critical set of social and emotional skills

Self-awareness
Recognising emotions and strengths

Self-management
Managing and regulating emotions, setting goals and learning persistence in the face of challenge

Responsible decision-making
Planning, understanding consequences, and making good decisions

Social awareness
Understanding the perspective of others and cooperating effectively

Relationship skills
Getting along with others and managing conflict well

Finish school well

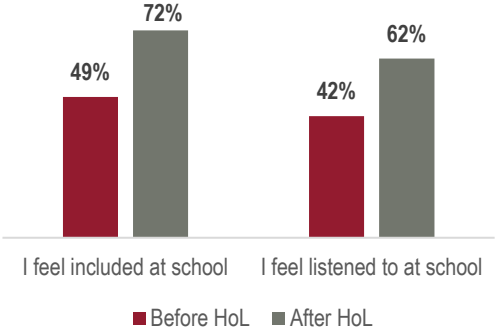
Hands on Learning students are more likely to make a positive transition to work or study after school

How we know Hands on Learning works - Overview

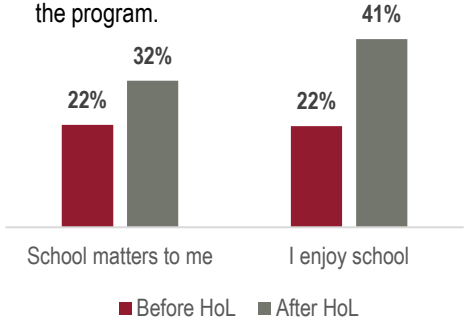
As a result of Hands on Learning, young people experience belonging and engagement at school.

Hands on Learning collect data from students, schools and parents about the outcomes the program targets, and the factors that research shows matter for students to succeed at school. This data shows consistently positive outcomes.

A sense of belonging at school is associated with improved attendance, engagement and achievement – and students report their sense of belonging grows significantly as a result of participating in Hands on Learning.



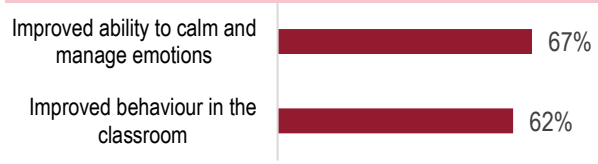
Motivation for learning is also a key predictor of achievement. Hands on Learning students enjoy and value school significantly more as a result of the program.



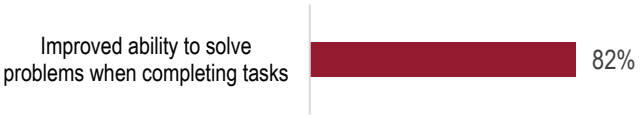
They develop strong social and emotional skills.

Two thirds of Hands on Learning students report significant improvements in their core social and emotional skills.

Self-management and self-awareness

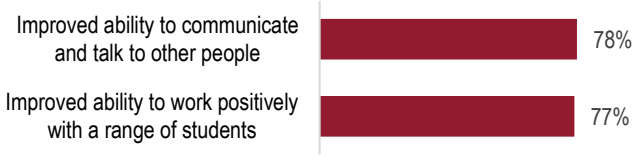


Responsible decision-making



"There's a student who told us that if he's calm and doing the right thing, his mates around him are (sic) will do the right thing too. He knows he's a bit of leader so he now tries to make the right decisions." - **Hands on Learning artisan-teacher**

Social awareness and relationship skills



"My confidence has increased and that helps me to make more friends." – **HoL Student**

And they are more likely to finish school well.

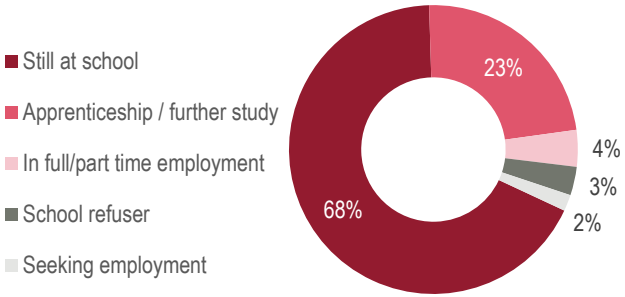
Parents and school leaders agree that Hands on Learning increases the number of students who are doing well at school and gaining the skills they'll need in the workforce.

97% of parents believe their children have gained new work and life skills that have made them **more job ready.**

50% of parents who were concerned about their children's grades say that their **results have improved** since starting in Hands on Learning

95% of Hands on Learning students are finishing school well and transitioning into work or study

Pathways of Hands on Learning students (2018)*



"Hands on Learning gives students the necessary 21st century skills that will help them in the workforce – teamwork, cooperation, leadership. All essential skills that will enable them to succeed later on."– **HoL Principal**

Return on Investment - Overview

The economic return of Hands on Learning is plausibly considerably more than the total program delivery cost. The threshold for achieving a positive return on investment is very low.

We estimated what it would take for Hands on Learning to break even or deliver a positive return on investment.

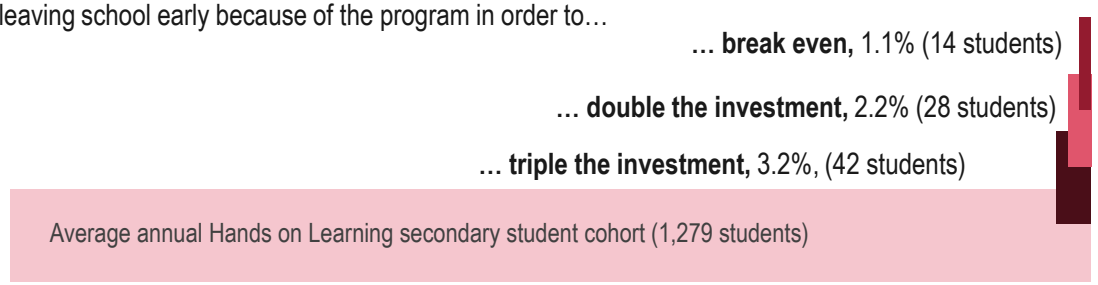
Every early school leaver costs government and the taxpayer $335,000 across their lifetimes, in lost tax revenue and increased health, crime and welfare spending.[1]

We estimated the number of secondary students Hands on Learning would need to prevent from leaving school early to generate a positive investment, given their $4.6m spend on nearly 1300 secondary school students each year.

Hands on Learning breaks even when just 14 secondary students out of the 1300 students in the program stay in school and finish Year 12 because they participated in the program.[2]

This is 1.1% of the total secondary cohort of Hands on Learning.

The percentage of secondary students in Hands on Learning who need to be prevented from leaving school early because of the program in order to…



There is good reason to believe that Hands on Learning achieves at least this impact.

All students in Hands on Learning have significant risk factors for leaving school early – but data indicates high levels of success at keeping them engaged in school and transitioning into positive pathways.

81%

of parents believe Hands on Learning is the key reason that their child has been engaged and motivated to come to school.

93%

of students report Hands on Learning as the key reason they have been engaged and motivated to come to school.

95%

of students were still in school, work or study according to a Hands on Learning destinations and pathways study in 2018.

Quantitative data sources: dandolo analysis of HoL student survey data, parent survey data, and school survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021), school and participant list, separating out secondary students only for all calculations in the ROI section.

1. Lamb, S. and Huo, S. Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education. Mitchell Institute report No. 02/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne, https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/counting-the-costs-of-lost-opportunity-in-Aus-education-mitchell-institute.pdf
2. dandolo cost modelling

Supporting Hands on Learning

Hands on Learning is seeking further investment to sustain and grow their impact.

Sustaining our current impact

Why

In 2020, for an estimated $6.4m a year, Hands on Learning reaches approximately 1700 students across 120 schools. The program delivery costs of Hands on Learning are covered by schools, and the enabling support that underpins the effectiveness of the program is largely philanthropically funded.

Their philanthropic investment is time-limited, and it is not feasible to ask more of schools than they already contribute. But without the support of Save the Children's team, schools will struggle to maintain the program, the level of quality and the impact they are achieving. Hands on Learning need to replenish their core funding in order to sustain their work and their impact.

Cost of delivering Hands on Learning

83% - staffing, equipment and resources

17% - enabling support

Direct costs to schools

0.5% of income comes from fees paid by schools
~95% funded by philanthropy

What

Contributing to the modest $1.1m cost of running Hands on Learning equips the program to:

- ✓ Sustain Hands on Learning programs in over 120 schools and reach approximately 1700 students each year
- ✓ Build the capacity of schools to implement the program and deliver it well
- ✓ Ensure each team of artisan-teachers has access to professional learning to grow their skills and knowledge
- ✓ Provide contemporary and evidence-informed resources to school and maintain a learning portal
- ✓ Collect and report data, grow the evidence base, and drive continuous improvement

Growing our reach

With additional investment, Hands on Learning can grow its reach and impact by working in more schools across the country.

Each year, around 18% of young people leave school early – that's nearly 60,000 students across the country.

Currently, the program, only works with with a fraction of those students and we know there is significant demand from schools for the kind of support Hands on Learning provides.

Investing in the growth plan equips the program to:

- Expand reach across all states and territories and increase the number of schools participating
- Extend the number of regional and remote schools able to deliver Hands on Learning
- Develop an additional package of support for schools with high-needs but unable to afford the full cost of delivery

Impact

Investing in Hands on Learning has a multiplier effect

Investing in Hands on Learning attracts additional resourcing from schools for the students who need it most.

It drives schools to put their resources and equity funding into a program that really makes a difference.

It delivers value far greater than its cost

Hands on Learning breaks even if only 1.1% of its secondary cohort are prevented from leaving school early.

It delivers a positive return on investment when more than 14 out of our 1300 secondary students finish school well because of Hands on Learning.

And it delivers measurable and consistent changes for the students most at risk of poor outcomes

More than two thirds of students who participate in Hands on Learning report significant improvements in their social and emotional skills.

It increases their sense of belonging at school, their motivation to learn, and the core skills they need to finish school well.

Why social and emotional skills matter

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2 **Schools can find it hard to meet the needs of students with social and emotional skill gaps**

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Low social and emotional skills are a key contributor to the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students

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Why social and emotional skills matter

Young people's social and emotional skills shape their ability to positively engage in school and are strongly predictive of their life outcomes.

What they are

Social and emotional skills are key competencies that young people need to succeed in school and life[1]

Self-management: The ability to independently complete tasks and take an active role in monitoring and regulating behaviour.

Self-awareness: The ability to identify emotions and recognise the link between feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Responsible decision-making: The ability to make caring choices about personal behaviour, to understand the consequences of actions, and make good choices.

Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships with all kinds of people.

Social awareness: The ability to show empathy and understand the perspectives of others, including those who come from different backgrounds.

Why they matter

In the classroom

Social and emotional skills shape positive behaviour and engagement in the classroom.

- They enable students to stay engaged in class, persist when they face challenges, and be able to work with others

In the community

Social and emotional skills help shape a student's ability to respond to others, understand diversity in backgrounds, and respond productively to differences in perspective.

- They enable young people to foster healthy friendships with their peers and be productive members of the community

In the workforce

Social and emotional skills underpin the key competencies and skills needed to transition in the 21st century workforce.

- Critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration skills are the key to jobs of the future

What they influence

Improved academic achievement[2]

Stronger social and emotional skills increased students' academic performance by **11 percentile points**, compared to students who did not.

Research shows positive relationships with teachers boosts students' chances of finishing school by 3%, valuing learning increases them by 5% and good classroom behaviour by another 3.5%.[3]

Social and emotional learning helps improve lifetime outcomes

There is a positive correlation between strong social emotional assets and **higher levels of well-being** up to 18 years later.[4]

Students that develop social and emotional skills have **10% fewer** psychological, behavioural, or substance abuse problems when they reach the age of 25.[5]

[1]CASEL is a leading framework for social and emotional learning, https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/#social-awareness

[2]Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child Development*, *82*(1), 405–432. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

[3]*Supporting school completion: The importance of engagement and effective teaching*. (n.d.). https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2019-05/apo-nid237806.pdf

[4] *What Does the Research Say?* (n.d.). CASEL. https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-does-the-research-say/

[5] *What Does the Research Say?* (n.d.). CASEL. https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-does-the-research-say/

The impact of disadvantage

Experiences of adversity disrupt the development of the skills young people need to succeed at school.

Social and emotional skill development can be compromised by experiences such as:

- Trauma
- Exposure to violence
- Stressful home environments
- Harsh and inconsistent parenting
- Abuse and neglect

Australian children growing up in disadvantaged communities show concerning social and emotional problems **at twice the rate** of their more advantaged peers.[1]

Young people who experience disadvantage are significantly more likely to experience:

- Emotional symptoms
- Behaviour problems
- Hyperactivity and inattention
- Difficulties with peer relationships[2]

Gaps in social and emotional learning are a key contributor to poorer education outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Reduced sense of belonging[3]

- OECD data shows a 13% gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students' sense of belonging at school.
- The proportion of young people who do not have support from friends, family or other adults was more than 3 times higher in low SES areas
- Disadvantaged young people are more likely to be bullied, and/or bully others

Challenges with behaviour in the classroom[4]

- More than 60% of teachers in low SES schools report disruption in the classroom several times daily, compared with 10% of high SES schools
- Students who disrupt classrooms often receive less support and encouragement, and more criticism and punishment, from their teachers.

Being disengaged from learning[5]

- Only 54% of low-SES students report positive teacher-student relationships, positive attendance at school and that they value school – a key predictor of completing Year 12
- Students from low SES backgrounds are less likely to adopt goal-focused approaches to learning – an established predictor of achievement at school

Lower achievement at school

- 49% of low SES students are on track for maths, reading and science, compared to 86% of high SES students

Increased likelihood of not finishing school well

- 67% of low SES students complete Year 12, compared to 91% of high SES students

[1] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. Australia's children. Cat. no. CWS 69. Canberra: AIHW, https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-children/contents/health/social-emotional-wellbeing
[2] Warren, D. and Edwards, B, Contexts of Disadvantage. Australian Institute of Family Studies Occasional Paper No. 53, 2017. https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2017/occpaper53_contexts_disadvantage_web.pdf
[3] De Bortoli, L. (2018). PISA Australia in Focus Number 1: Sense of belonging at school. Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). https://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/30 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/peer-relationships, Tomaszewski, W., Xiang, N., & Western, M. (2020). Student engagement as a mediator of the effects of socio-economic status on academic performance among secondary school students in Australia. *British Educational Research Journal*, *46*(3), 610–630. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3599
[4] Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., and Griffiths, K. (2017). Engaging students: creating classrooms that improve learning. Grattan Institute.
[5] *Supporting school completion: The importance of engagement and effective teaching*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 19, 2021, from https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2019-05/apo-nid237806.pdf, Tomaszewski, W., Xiang, N., & Western, M. (2020). Student engagement as a mediator of the effects of socio-economic status on academic performance among secondary school students in Australia. *British Educational Research Journal*, *46*(3), 610–630. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3599

Cost of not finishing school well

Not finishing school well has significant personal, social and economic costs.

Individual costs

Finishing school is associated with increased likelihood of being employed, being in good health and reporting life satisfaction.

Young people who do not experience success at school are less likely to go onto further study or work. They are less likely to have financial security and are more likely to have poor health, contact with the justice system, be socially isolated, and have mental health challenges.

Young people who live in very remote locations, are Indigenous, or have a disability have much lower Year 12 retention rates than other young people, making them the most vulnerable cohort at risk of leaving school early.

Research shows that students who do not complete school:[1]

Earn less than those who complete school, with those completing school having an 18.6% increase in earnings for men and 14.5% increase in earnings for women. Early school leavers on average lose $27,513 in earnings.

Are 4.5 times more likely to go to prison.

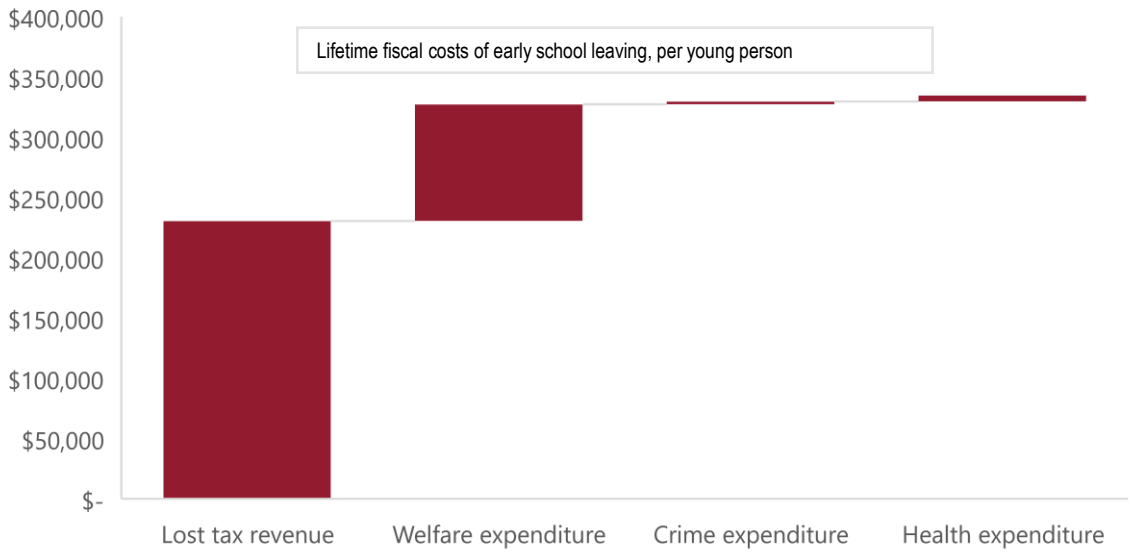
Are twice as likely to be on income support.

Have greater risk of heart conditions, strokes, hypertension, high cholesterol, depression, and diabetes.

Social and economic costs

Each early school leaver costs government and taxpayers at least $335,000 across their lifetimes – a total of $12 billion for the 18% of students who leave school early.

This is a conservative estimate of the cost to taxpayers of not finishing school well, from lost tax revenue and increased welfare, crime and health spending.[1]



This cost does not include the broader lifetime costs of developing individual capability and helping to build a socially inclusive society. Some additional costs include:

- Reduced productivity from having fewer skilled workers, which represents a significant loss of economic opportunity for the country
- The economic vulnerability for the young people themselves in that they are at greater risk of unemployment, cycles of low pay, and employment insecurity in the longer term
- Economic distortion imposed by raising taxes to pay for government social and health programs
- The social costs of entrenching the cycle of disadvantage, a less healthy community, and higher crime rates

Sources:

[1] Lamb, S. and Huo, S. Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education. Mitchell Institute report No. 02/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne, https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/counting-the-costs-of-lost-opportunity-in-Aus-education-mitchell-institute.pdf

Breaking the cycle

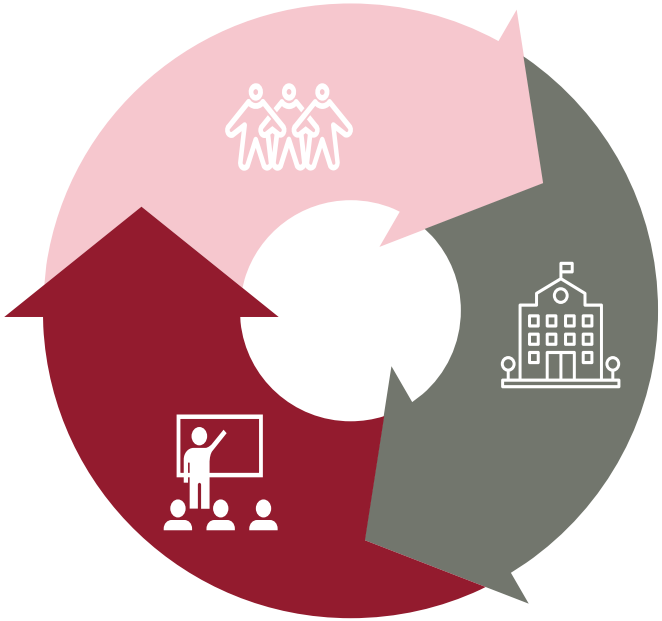
Schools can play a transformational role in equipping young people with the social and emotional skills they need to succeed – but too often schools intensify the problem rather than break the cycle.

For some students, school is a vicious cycle. They start without the foundational social and emotional skills they need to thrive, don't have the opportunity to learn them, and their struggles in the classroom exacerbate and entrench their challenges. If schools are unable to engage with students whose needs aren't met in traditional classrooms, they are very likely to fall by the wayside. However, if schools can meet them – through programs like Hands on Learning – you get significantly better outcomes.

1 Social and emotional skills predict success at school and throughout life – and without them, students struggle

- Students without these skills are more likely to struggle with belonging, behaviour, friendships, motivation to learn and achievement

"The majority of our students in HoL come from disadvantaged backgrounds – broken homes, drug abuse, single families, parental neglect. This is a good environment to show them that they can be successful too."- **Hands on Learning artisan-teacher**



2 Schools can find it hard to meet the needs of students with social and emotional skill gaps

- Social and emotional skills can be learned through school, but schools aren't always able to create the kinds of environments and opportunities necessary for students who need more intensive support

"It can be really hard for some students to sit in the classroom. We needed a program that could help us engage with this cohort. With the smaller groups in HoL, we get to really know them, build rapport, and foster positive relationships with them." - **Hands on Learning artisan-teacher**

3 Traditional classrooms can intensify the challenges – creating additional stress, reducing confidence, triggering challenging behaviour and reducing belonging and motivation

"*Some of these students couldn't attend school full-time because they would have tantrums if they got frustrated and couldn't stay in class.*" - **Hands on Learning artisan-teacher**

Traditional classrooms don't meet the needs of all students and can be challenging environments for some. Hands on Learning targets a cohort of students who have often:

- Not experienced success in the classroom and have low confidence, self-esteem and motivation as a result
- Struggle to build good relationships with teachers and classmates
- Often exhibit severe and challenging behaviours
- Have low or sporadic attendance

"A lot of these students really struggle to attend school. Some don't come to school unless it's HoL, but bit by bit their attendance improves." - **Hands on Learning artisan-teacher**

Source: dandolo case study interviews

How Hands on Learning works – and how we know it *works*

Impact of Hands on Learning

Hands on Learning delivers a program that equips students with the necessary capabilities to thrive and finish school well

122 schools participate in the program across 4 jurisdictions (QLD, NSW, VIC, TAS)

50% of schools are considered rural, with another 19% of schools considered regional schools

82% of schools are in the lowest socio-economic areas of Australia, with the student cohorts more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds

The Hands on Learning program creates the environments and opportunities that students need to:

Experience belonging and engagement at school

- **49%** of school staff saying that the program has helped improve attendance
- **30%** of more students feel listened to and included at school

Develop strong social and emotional skills

- **62%** of students* reported that their behaviour had improved in the classroom after being in HoL
- **82%** of students* reported that their ability to solve problems when completing work tasks had improved.
- **77%** of students* reported that their ability to work positively with a range of other students had improved

Finish school well

- **95%** of Hands on Learning students finish school, get an apprenticeship, or get a job

The economic benefit of Hands on Learning is plausibly more than triple the total program delivery cost**

~$4.6 million total cost of delivering Hands on Learning to secondary students

To breakeven financially, only 14 of the 1300 secondary students in the program annually would need to be prevented from leaving school early due to Hands on Learning

81% of parents believe Hands on Learning is the key reason that their child has been engaged and motivated to come to school

93% of students report Hands on Learning as the key reason they have been engaged and motivated to come to school

95% of students were still in school, or in positive pathways, according to a HoL destinations and pathways study (2018)

* where this is an issue ** At the time of writing / publication

Source: dandolo analysis of HoL 2021 school lists, HoL student survey data, school survey data, parent survey data, (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021), dandolo cost modelling

How Hands on Learning works - Overview

Hands on Learning builds the skills that young people need to succeed at school and through life.

Hands on Learning:

A program for students who are not thriving in the classroom

At the start, most Hands on Learning students struggle with one or more of the following:

- Have low or sporadic attendance
- Show challenging behaviour in the classroom
- Are disengaged from learning

A place to belong and people to belong to

Students spend a full day each week in Hands on Learning, for at least two terms

They are part of a small, consistent group of up to 10 students

They are supported by two artisan-teachers who are skilled relationship builders and can be former tradespeople

They have their own dedicated and safe space within the school

Practical projects and a chance to give back

Build

Students work together on practical projects like:

Construction – e.g. building picnic tables for the school, putting up shelving in classrooms, fitting out shipping containers as community spaces

Landscaping – e.g. creating community gardens, landscaping around the school, gardening for elderly community members, growing vegetables

Café

Students work together in a commercial kitchen and:

- Prepare lunch for the school canteen
- Cater for community events
- Participate in Paddock to Plate initiatives – utilizing food from school grown gardens

Cultivating social and emotional skills

Each day starts with a Focus Plan with some specific goals such as -

- To focus on the task I've been given
- To ask for help when I get stuck
- To say nice things to other people
- Share my thoughts on how to get a task done

Reflection on their progress is built into the daily routine, as students

- Reflect on their progress and get feedback on their Focus Plans
- Share feedback on the strengths and achievements of others
- Recognise their own achievements

Save the Children's Hands on Learning team provides a clear methodology, structured and ongoing implementation support, professional development and mentoring for artisan-teachers, learning portal with tools and resources and ongoing data collection

Hands on Learning creates the environments and opportunities that evidence shows students need to:

Experience belonging and engagement at school

Students develop positive relationships with their peers and artisan-teachers, enabling them to feel like they belong at school.

They experience success in 'hands on' projects in a way that builds their confidence and helps them see value in school.

Develop strong social and emotional skills

Hands on Learning explicitly cultivates a core and critical set of social and emotional skills

Self-awareness
Recognising emotions and strengths

Self-management
Managing and regulating emotions, setting goals and learning persistence in the face of challenge

Responsible decision-making
Planning, understanding consequences, and making good decisions

Social awareness
Understanding the perspective of others and cooperating effectively

Relationship skills
Getting along with others and managing conflict well

Finish school well

Hands on Learning students are more likely to make a positive transition to work or study after school

Alignment with the evidence-base

The design and delivery of Hands on Learning is strongly aligned with the evidence-base.

Professor Lucas Walsh from the Monash Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice (CYPEP) synthesised the features of effective programs intended to support young people at risk of disengaging from school, and found strong alignment with the design of Hands on Learning within his written review.

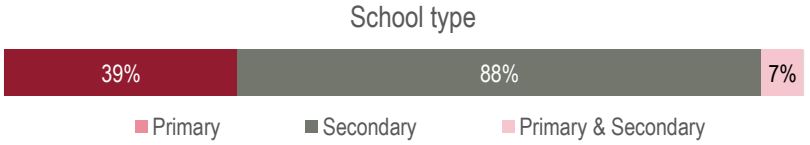
Characteristics of effective programs (Walsh, 2021)	Alignment with Hands on Learning	Key program design feature of Hands on Learning
Changing learning environments so they better align with the strengths of students (rather than deficit approaches that aim to change the student)	✓	• A different kind of learning environment within the school –an alternative to traditional classrooms • An approach to learning that gives many students the opportunity to find new strengths and build on existing strengths.
Programs that provide stability and consistency (rather than short-term, one-off interventions)	✓	• An ongoing, embedded program with regular and consistent attendance • Length of participation is flexible and oriented around student needs
Opportunities for learning that has relevance and purpose, and cultivating skills that are meaningful for students	✓	• A focus on projects with purpose – that meet a need and deliver value to others • A service learning orientation that enable students to participate in and contribute to community
Students actively participate in the learning, including: • Group work that balances agency and participation • Assessment via reflection and peer evaluation • Student choice and autonomy	✓	• Activities that require collaboration, provide opportunities for leadership, and include students in design and delivery • Focus Plan routines that create space for ongoing self-reflection and opportunities to give and receive peer feedback
Fostering belonging and participation in school settings	✓	• Providing a place to belong and people to belong to and a consistent focus on building a sense of belonging at school • Maintaining students' connection to school and between Hands on Learning and the classroom
Fostering positive relationships with teachers	✓	• Small student to adult ratios to enable relationship-building and individualised approaches • Selection of artisan-teachers with strong relationship skills • Provides an opportunity for teaching staff to recognise abilities and strengths in students which are typically harder to discern.
Scaffolding the development of social and emotional skills – embedded in everyday activities and interactions	✓	• Clear methodologies for developing social and emotional skills integrated into the practical projects and daily routines of Hands on Learning programs
Flexible program delivery that can adapt to local contexts, including two-way learning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	✓	• Adaptations to local contexts and leveraging of local strengths • Collaboration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders where appropriate

Who participates in Hands on Learning

Hands on Learning reaches the students and schools most in need of additional support.

Hands on Learning schools

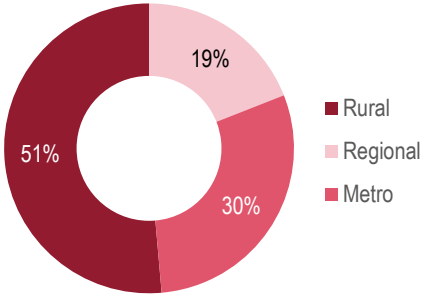
There are currently 122 primary and secondary schools operating Hands on Learning programs



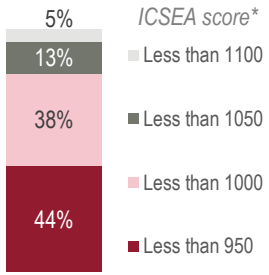
Hands on learning operates across four states. Two thirds of participating schools are considered rural or regional, and the majority are in the lowest socio-economic areas of the country.

National footprint

Regional footprint



Socio-economic footprint



A high proportion of Hands on Learning schools continue delivering the program

HoL School longevity

Hands on Learning students (Source: 2020 student demographic data)

Hands on Learning students are more likely to be disadvantaged across a number of factors:

8%
of students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

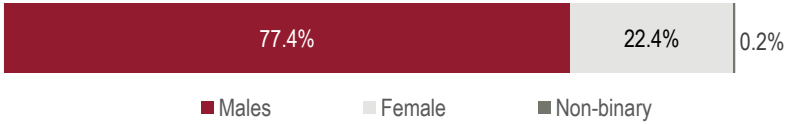
82%
Of schools are in the lowest socio-economic areas of Australia

12%
of students have a disability

2%
of students identify as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

The majority of the student cohort is male

Gender of 2020 Hands on Learning students



Source: dandolo analysis of Hands on Learning school survey data from 2020 and 2021 school lists
* ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage), where 1000 is the national average.

How we know it *works*

Hands on Learning has a clear theory of change that is grounded in strong evidence.

Hands on Learning's theory of change is grounded in strong evidence about the importance of belonging, engagement and social and emotional skills for enabling students to finish school well.

Hands on Learning achieves this ultimate outcome …

Young people finish school well

They do this by improving these mutually reinforcing intermediate outcomes…

Young people develop strong social and emotional skills

Young people experience belonging and engagement at school

They enable this by delivering these program foundations …

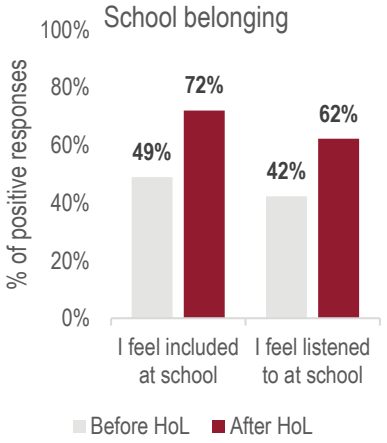
A place to belong to, people to belong to, real things to do, a chance to give back, and reflective practice

They routinely collect data from students, teachers / school leaders / artisan-teachers and parents / families to track progress against these outcomes.

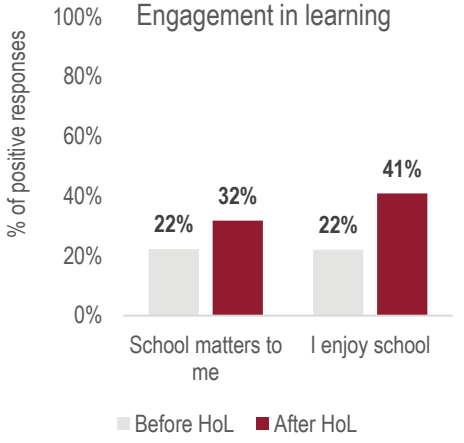
Hands on Learning is effective at strengthening belonging at school and engagement in learning.

Young people experience belonging and engagement at school

Hands on Learning helps students feel included and listened to, improving their overall connection towards the school



Students show improved attitude towards going to school after Hands on Learning, with 49% of school staff saying that the program has helped improve attendance



"For our students, the impact has been massive. In one case, the absences were significant with a real lack of connection with school until now." - **HoL School Principal**

"I have HoL on a Thursday and then Friday at school works so much better because you've had that day out of class and you don't have a headache. I'm not sick of school and I can concentrate much better in class."- **HoL Student**

Qualitative sources: dandolo case study interviews, Hands on Learning newsletters
Quantitative sources: dandolo analysis of HoL student survey data, parent survey data, and school survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021)

How we know it *works*

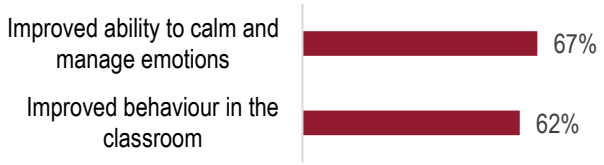
Hands on Learning enables students to develop social and emotional capabilities that are crucial for their development.

Young people develop strong social and emotional skills

Hands on Learning students have greater self-awareness and self-management

67% of students reported that they are more able to **calm and manage their emotions**

62% of students reported that their **behaviour had improved** in the classroom



""Being part of HoL has opened my eyes to what is possible and in front of me in my life. HoL helped me learn to work in a team. It's helped me stay at school. It's helped me communicate more confidently with lots of people in my part-time job as a waitress at a busy pub. - **Student**

"I've seen students who beforehand couldn't read our emotions but are now showing empathy and compassion towards one another." – **Hands on Learning artisan-teacher**

Their responsible decision-making improves

82% of students that their **ability to solve problems** when completing work tasks had improved.

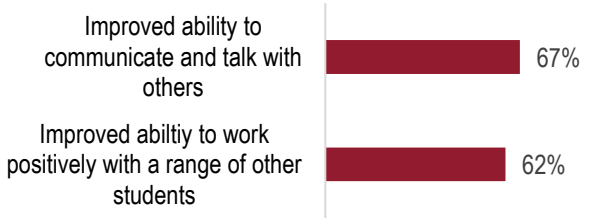
"There's a student who told us that if he's calm and doing the right thing, his mates around him are will do the right thing too. He knows he's a bit of leader so he now tries to make the right decisions so that he can be successful in school." - **Hands on Learning artisan-teacher**

"We talk a lot about safety and good practice when we do our projects, and it really helps them build the foundations to make responsible decisions later on in whatever they want to do. It gives them a head start."- **Hands on Learning artisan-teacher**

And they have more social awareness and relationship skills because of participating in Hands on Learning

67% of students reported that their **communications skills** are improved

62% of students reported that they **work better with other students**



"After a year being in HoL I'm starting to ask questions and trying new things. It's changed me a lot. I'm more confident to be myself. More willing to have a go at more things at school." **- Student**

"My confidence has increased and that helps me to make more friends. When I first started, I was nervous working around other people, but now I am happy to show the new kids around and what to do. **- Student**

Qualitative sources: dandolo case study interviews, Hands on Learning newsletters
Quantitative sources: dandolo analysis of HoL student survey data, parent survey data, and school survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021). Percentages reflect the proportion of students for which this was an issue at the start of Hands on Learning.

How we know it *works*

Hands on Learning equips students with the necessary skills and capabilities that allow them to succeed and finish school well

Young people finish school well

How Hands on Learning helped a student at a regional Victorian school realise their future potential

Two artisan-teachers share the story of a student who went from struggling academically to now pursing the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), a hands-on, practical alternative qualification to VCE (Year 11 and 12):

"We had a student who came into the program and loved it, but he would have a tantrum whenever he was in a classroom. After being in our program for a year, the school pushed him real hard to do VCAL after seeing his potential."

He's now stayed in school for another two years, with his behaviour changing for the better.

"For us, he was a good kid and had a lot of potential, but he didn't realise it for himself. Now he's really buckled down and focused on doing his studies."

After being part of the program, the student has found a pathway and is dedicated to pursuing VCAL. The teachers noted that the program helped him take real accountability and build his work ethic, which has strengthened him to transition to higher study.

Hands on Learning gives young people the skills they need to succeed at school and in the workplace

97% of parents believe their children have gained new work and life skills that have made them more job ready.

"Hands on Learning gives students the necessary 21st century skills that will help them in the workforce – teamwork, cooperation, leadership. All essential skills that will enable them to succeed later on."– **HoL School Principal**

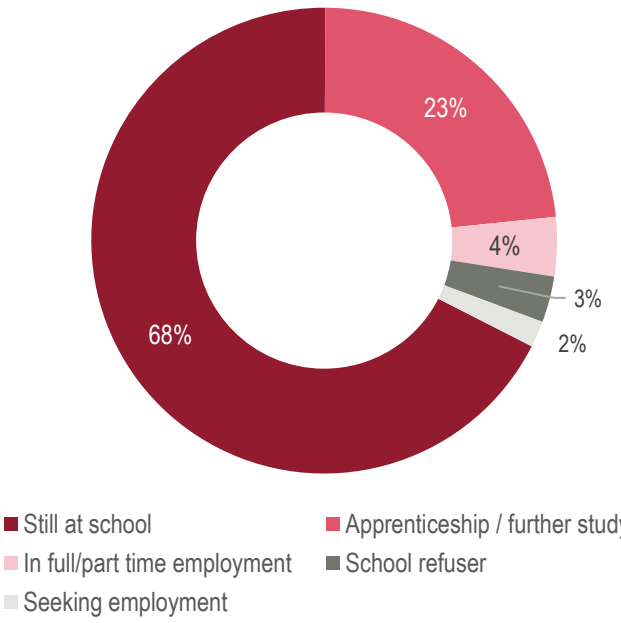
50% of parents who were concerned about their child's achievement say that their children's school results have improved

"Ever since I started in Hands on Learning, my grades have gone up and it has helped me to want to come to school. When I think Hands on Learning I think teamwork, accomplishment, and re-engagement because that is what has happened to me." – **HoL Student**

Most Hands on Learning students stay in school and transition into work or study after school

95% of students were still in school, or in positive pathways, according to a HoL destinations and pathways study in 2018.

Pathways of Hands on Learning students (2018)*



Qualitative sources: dandolo case study interviews, Hands on Learning newsletters
Quantitative sources: dandolo analysis of HoL student survey data, parent survey data, and school survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021). Destination survey data based on 13 schools who had been in the program long enough to track destination outcomes.

Return on Investment

The economic return of Hands on Learning is plausibly more than triple the total program delivery cost (for secondary students). The threshold for achieving a positive return on investment is very low.

We estimated what it would take for Hands on Learning to break even or deliver a positive return on investment.

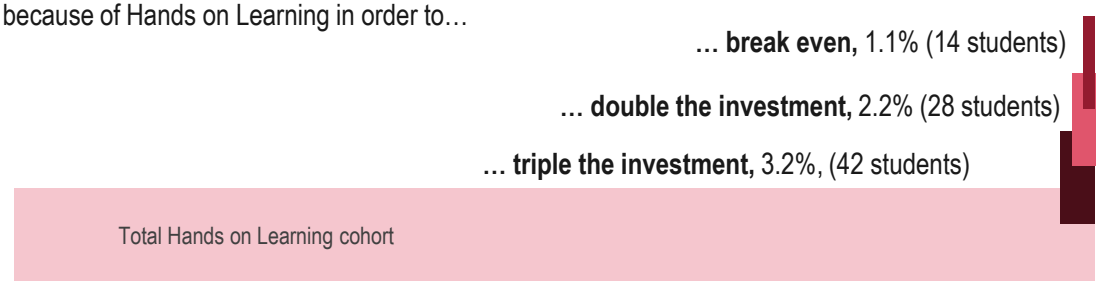
Every early school leaver costs government and the taxpayer $335,000 across their lifetimes, in lost tax revenue and increased health, crime and welfare spending.[1]

We estimated the number of secondary students Hands on Learning would need to prevent from leaving school early to generate a positive investment, given their $4.6m spend on nearly 1300 secondary school students each year.

Hands on Learning breaks even when just 14 secondary students stay in school and finish Year 12 because they participated in the program.[2]

This is 1.1% of the total cohort of Hands on Learning.

The percentage of secondary students in who need to be prevented from leaving school early because of Hands on Learning in order to…



This model takes a very conservative approach to estimating the impact of Hands on Learning and is likely to understate the full benefits of the program. *The model only includes fiscal cots to government and does not estimate the additional costs saved over the lifetime of students with improved social and emotional skills and wellbeing, or any of the other broader, flow-on effects of participation in the program.*

There is good reason to believe that Hands on Learning achieves at least this impact.

All students in Hands on Learning have significant risk factors for leaving school early – but data indicates high levels of success at keeping them engaged in school and transitioning into positive pathways.

81%

of parents believe Hands on Learning is the key reason that their child has been engaged and motivated to come to school.

93%

of students report Hands on Learning as the key reason they have been engaged and motivated to come to school.

95%

of students were still in school, work or study according to a Hands on Learning destinations and pathways study in 2018.

Quantitative data sources: dandolo analysis of HoL student survey data, parent survey data, and school survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021), school and participant list

1. https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/counting-the-costs-of-lost-opportunity-in-Aus-education-mitchell-institute.pdf
2. Dandolo cost modelling

Support to sustain and grow our impact

Supporting Hands on Learning

Hands on Learning is seeking further investment to sustain and grow their impact.

Sustaining our current impact

Why

For $6.4m a year, Hands on Learning reaches approximately 1700 students across 120 schools. The program delivery costs of Hands on Learning are covered by schools, and the enabling support that underpins the effectiveness of the program is largely philanthropically funded.

Their philanthropic investment is time-limited, and it is not feasible to ask more of schools than they already contribute. But without the support of Save the Children's team, schools will struggle to maintain the program, the level of quality and the impact they are achieving. Hands on Learning need to replenish their core funding in order to sustain their work and their impact.

Cost of delivering Hands on Learning

83% - staffing, equipment and resources

17% - enabling support

Direct costs to schools

0.5% of income comes from fees paid by schools
~95% funded by philanthropy

What

Contributing to the modest $1.1m cost of running Hands on Learning equips the program to:

- ✓ Sustain Hands on Learning programs in over 120 schools and reach approximately 1700 students each year
- ✓ Build the capacity of schools to implement the program and deliver it well
- ✓ Ensure each team of artisan-teachers has access to professional learning to grow their skills and knowledge
- ✓ Provide contemporary and evidence-informed resources to school and maintain a learning portal
- ✓ Collect and report data, grow the evidence base, and drive continuous improvement

Growing our reach

With additional investment, Hands on Learning can grow its reach and impact by working in more schools across the country.

Each year, around 18% of young people leave school early – that's nearly 60,000 students across the country.

Currently, the program, only works with with a fraction of those students and we know there is significant demand from schools for the kind of support Hands on Learning provides.

Investing in the growth plan equips the program to:

- Expand reach across all states and territories and increase the number of schools participating
- Extend the number of regional and remote schools able to deliver Hands on Learning
- Develop an additional package of support for schools with high-needs but unable to afford the full cost of delivery

Impact

Investing in Hands on Learning has a multiplier effect

Investing in Hands on Learning attracts additional resourcing from schools for the students who need it most.

It drives schools to put their resources and equity funding into a program that really makes a difference.

It delivers value far greater than its cost

Hands on Learning breaks even if only 1.1% of its secondary cohort are prevented from leaving school early.

It delivers a positive return on investment when more than 14 out of our 1300 secondary students finish school well because of Hands on Learning.

And it delivers measurable and consistent changes for the students most at risk of poor outcomes

More than two thirds of students who participate in Hands on Learning report significant improvements in their social and emotional skills.

It increases their sense of belonging at school, their motivation to learn, and the core skills they need to finish school well.

Appendix A: Return on Investment Methodology

Return on Investment

The economic return of Hands on Learning is plausibly more than triple the total program delivery cost for secondary students. The threshold for achieving a positive return on investment is very low.

We estimated what it would take for Hands on Learning to break even or deliver a positive return on investment.

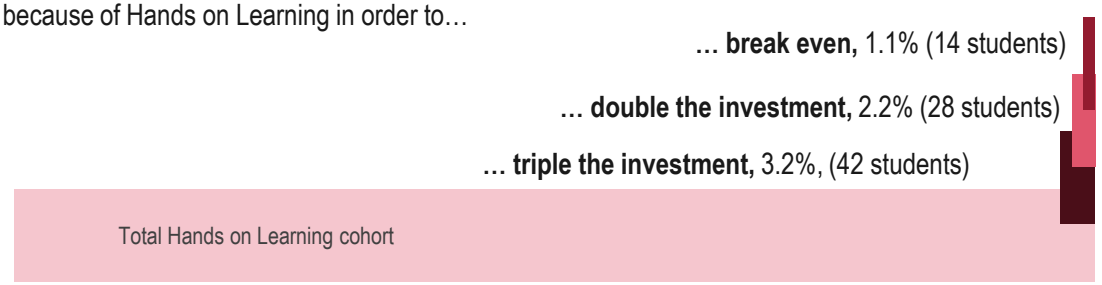
Every early school leaver costs government and the taxpayer $334,000 across their lifetimes, in lost tax revenue and increased health, crime and welfare spending.[1]

We estimated the number of students Hands on Learning would need to prevent from leaving school early to generate a positive investment, given their $4.6m spend on nearly 1300 secondary school students each year.

Hands on Learning breaks even when just 14 secondary students stay in school and finish Year 12 because they participated in the program.

This is 1.1% of the total cohort of Hands on Learning.

The percentage of secondary students in who need to be prevented from leaving school early because of Hands on Learning in order to…



There is good reason to believe that Hands on Learning achieves at least this impact.

All students in Hands on Learning have significant risk factors for leaving school early – but data indicates high levels of success at keeping them engaged in school and transitioning into positive pathways.

81%

of parents believe Hands on Learning is the key reason that their child has been engaged and motivated to come to school.

93%

of students report Hands on Learning as the key reason they have been engaged and motivated to come to school.

95%

of students were still in school, work or study according to a Hands on Learning destinations and pathways study in 2018.

Quantitative data sources: dandolo analysis of Hands on Learning student survey data, parent survey data, and school survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021), school and participant list

1. https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/counting-the-costs-of-lost-opportunity-in-Aus-education-mitchell-institute.pdf
2. Dandolo cost modelling

Methodology

The methodology quantifies the change in outcomes for secondary students derived from investment in the program and models the value of that change.

We don't have experimental data that confidently *attributes* Year 12 completion to participation in Hands on Learning. Instead, we have estimated the number/proportion of the Hands on Learning cohort who would have left school early without participation in the program in order for the program to break even or deliver a positive return on investment. The break-even point is very low (1.2% of the total annual cohort), which gives good confidence that Hands on Learning provides a strong return on investment.

There are three key stages to calculating a cost-benefit ratio:

1 Calculate the total cost of delivering Hands-on Learning to secondary students annually

Cost to the secondary schools
- Staff resourcing cost [1]
- Project cost [2]
- Hands On Learning Program Fees [3]

+

Annual Hand On Learning Secondary student Expenditure [4] (Estimated as a proportion of the total expenditure)

2 Estimate the fiscal cost to the taxpayer of one early school leaver over their lifetime (from the Mitchell Institute report).*

3 Calculate the number of secondary students that Hands on Learning would need to have prevented from leaving school early to:

Case A: Break even	Case B: Double the investment	Case C: Triple the investment
Cost-benefit ratio of 1:1	Cost-benefit ratio of 2:1	Cost-benefit ratio of 3:1

Estimate the plausibility of each of these return-on-investment cases comparing these cases to the total Hands-on Learning cohort, using Hands On Learning data to support the cases.

This model takes a very conservative approach to estimating the impact of Hands on Learning and is likely to understate the full benefits of the program

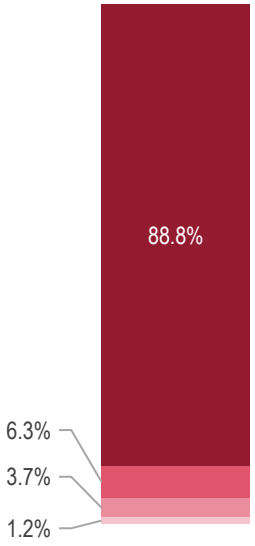
This is because:

- We are only counting the direct fiscal costs to government and taxpayers of early school leaving, not the broader social benefits that accrue to individuals from greater income, better health and wellbeing.
- The model does not estimate the additional costs saved over the lifetime of students with improved social and emotional skills and wellbeing, or any of the other broader, flow-on effects of participation in the program.
- We are only considering impact on secondary students within the model, given the more direct link between preventing early school leaving for secondary students.

Hands on Learning Cost analysis

We estimate the cost of delivering the Hands on Learning program to secondary students annually is ~$4.6 million.

Hands on Learning expenditure* includes:



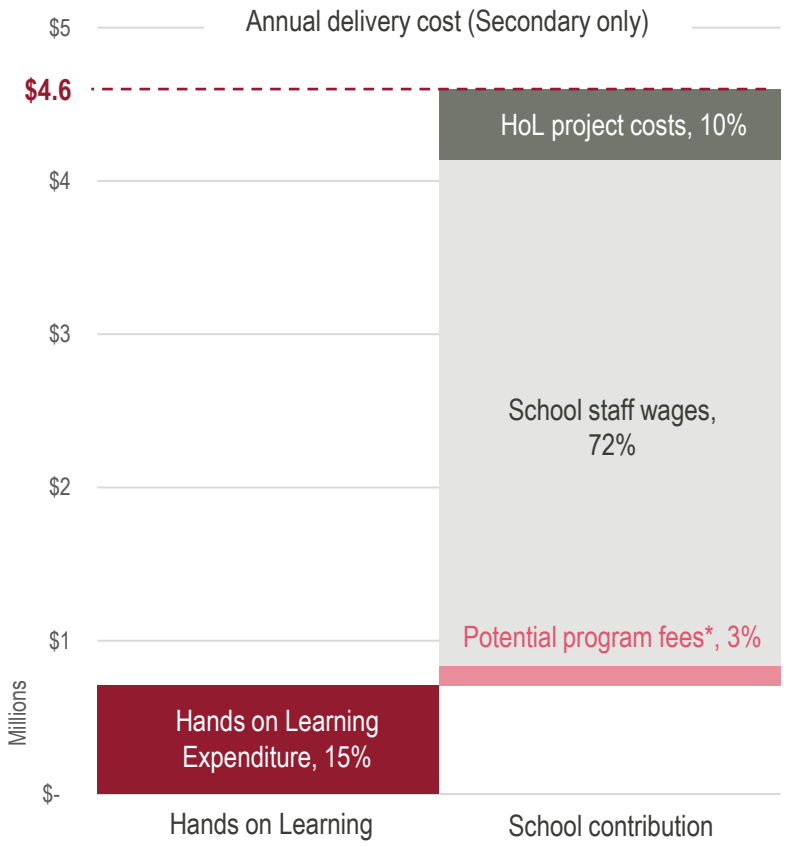
- Staff costs, including:
  - School Support Managers
  - Evaluation / measurement staff
  - Finance and operations staff
  - Marketing and fundraising staff
- Administration and office costs
- Supplies, transportation and implementation
- Marketing and other

* These categories of costs were adjusted to reflect the proportion on expenditure on secondary schools

Of the total $4.6m cost of Hands on Learning in secondary schools, only a fifth of the cost of delivery is provided by Save the Children.

Schools contribute ~ 85% of the cost of delivery to secondary students through staff wages, project materials costs and program fees to Hands on Learning (for some but not all schools).

Save the Children's expenditure is less than a fifth of the total delivery cost of Hands on Learning



*** Note:** For this cost model, we calculated program fees assuming all secondary schools in the 2020 school list paid the program fee. In reality not all schools paid this fee in 2020, so this number reflects the potential estimated cost to schools. See Slide 33 for a full list of assumptions.

Source: dandolo cost modelling

Benefits of reducing early school leaving

There are huge costs associated with the lost opportunity of early school leaving, which is estimated to cost the government $334,000 across one lifetime.

Approach

The Mitchell Institute estimates annual and lifetime (working age) costs in the areas of health, government assistance, crime, labour and employment associated with early school leaving and disengagement from full-time work and study.

There are a mix of social and fiscal costs.

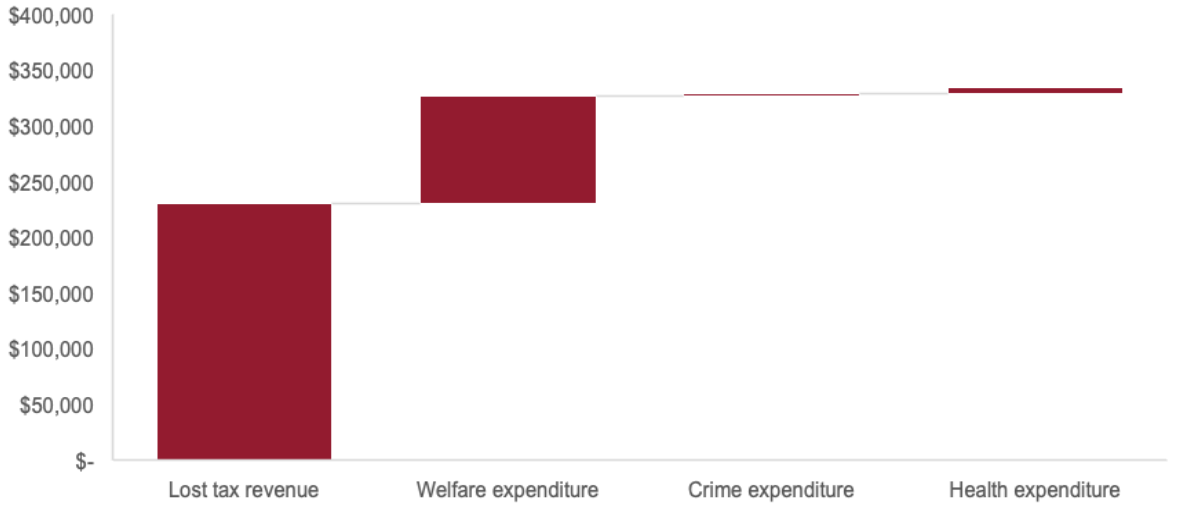
- Social costs: borne by individuals and society
- Fiscal costs: costs borne by government and taxpayers

Examples include:

Fiscal	Social
Reduced tax payments	Individual income losses
Higher reliance on government health programs	Social costs of poorer health
Increased expenditure on criminal justice	Loss from increased crime
Higher reliance on welfare	Excess burden of taxation
	Reduced productivity spillovers

Each early school leaver costs government and taxpayers at least $334,000 across their lifetimes – a total of $12 billion for the 18% of students who leave school early.

This is a conservative estimate of the cost to taxpayers of not finishing school well, from lost tax revenue and increased welfare, crime and health spending.[1]



Limitations

We use the fiscal costs only in this modelling. This does not include the broader lifetime costs of developing individual capability and helping to build a socially inclusive society. Some additional costs include:

- Reduced productivity from having fewer skilled workers, which represents a significant loss of economic opportunity for the country
- The economic vulnerability for the young people themselves in that they are at greater risk of unemployment, cycles of low pay, and employment insecurity in the longer term
- Economic distortion imposed by raising taxes to pay for government social and health programs
- The social costs of entrenching the cycle of disadvantage, a less healthy community, and higher crime rates.

Source:
Lamb, S. and Huo, S. Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education. Mitchell Institute report No. 02/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne, https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/counting-the-costs-of-lost-opportunity-in-Aus-education-mitchell-institute.pdf

Key assumptions – Delivery Costs

School Costs (based on 88 secondary schools in the 2021 school list)

SCA Hands on Learning Support Costs

1

Hands on Learning Program costs

Assumed program costs are between $5,000 – 10,000 per school, based on advice from Save the Children and case study schools on average costs of delivery.

- Assumed schools with a café program component are $10,000
- Assumed schools with just a build component are $5,000
- Only counted secondary schools in calculations

Note: We acknowledge that each school's program looks different and costs vary between schools. However due to program costs being a small percentage of the overall delivery cost of Hands on Learning, we believe this range to be a representative estimate.

2

School staff wages

Wage calculations are based on the Hands on Learning FTE staff data for teaching and non-teaching staff at each secondary school

- Assumed a teaching staff annual salary of $78,000
  Source: average weekly wage from 2018 ABS data (using TableBuilder) for education professionals with a bachelors degree or higher
- Assumed a non-teaching staff annual salary of $43,845
  Source: average weekly wage from 2018 ABS data (using TableBuilder) for education professionals with "no degree", "Certificate" or "Diploma".
- We note that wages have increased for teachers (particularly in Victoria) in the last 3-4 years. However we chose 2018 ABS data as it is the most reflective source for actual weekly wages to avoid making additional assumptions about presumed seniority or experience of Hands on Learning teachers and artisan-teachers.
  As an additional reference point, $77,474 is the annual salary of a 2020 Victorian government school teacher who has around 3 years of experience (Range 1-3).
- Aggregated staff wage costs at each secondary school by using the average FTE for three school cases:
  - 1. Teaching staff only
  - 2. Non-teaching staff only
  - 3. Both teaching and non teaching staff

  Then multiplying these cases by the number of schools in the 2021 school list.

3

Program fees

- Program fees are standardised based on the size and ICSEA rating of a school (see table below)
- Total cost of program fees to schools was calculated using the 2020 schools list (only including secondary schools), including school ICSEA data and school enrolment data.
  Note: We understand this is an overestimation as not all schools currently pay school fees but given the model methodology, this difference is small and only affects the percentage schools contribute rather than the total delivery cost of the program.
- We chose this assumption to demonstrate potential program fees, showing the very low percentage that program fees contribute to the overall cost.

Fees for participation in Hands on Learning	Annual cost
Small and <1000 ICSEA	$ 1,000
Large and <1000 ICSEA	$ 1,500
Small and >1000 ICSEA	$ 1,250
Large and >1000 ICSEA	$ 1,750

4

Annual Hands on Learning School Support Costs

- We subtracted program fees from the Hands on Learning support costs to not double count this cost in the modelling (as it's a source of revenue for Save the Children)
- Given we are only accounting for the delivery cost of secondary students, we applied a secondary "factor" to total Hands on Learning Expenditure based on the percentage of secondary schools on the 2021 school list (73%).
- This factor was only applied to the scalable costs (as below)

Support Cost Category	Secondary factor
Total Staff Costs	0.73
Total Supplies, Transportation & Implementation	0.73
Total Office	1.0
Total Marketing, Financial Depreciation & Other	1.0
Total Administration and Internal Allocations	1.0

Appendix B: Data analysis methodology

Impact of Hands on Learning - Summary

Hands on Learning is a program that equips students with the necessary capabilities to thrive and finish school well

122 schools participate in the program across 4 jurisdictions (QLD, NSW, VIC, TAS)

50% of schools are considered rural, with another 19% of schools considered regional schools

82% of schools are in the lowest socio-economic areas of Australia, with the student cohort more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds

The Hands on Learning program creates the environments and opportunities that students need to:

Experience belonging and engagement at school

- **49%** of school staff saying that the program has helped improve attendance
- **30%** of more students feel listened to and included at school

Develop strong social and emotional skills

- **62%** of students reported that their behaviour had improved in the classroom after being in Hands on Learning
- **82%** of students* reported that their ability to solve problems when completing work tasks had improved.
- **77%** of students* reported that their ability to work positively with a range of other students had improved

Finish school well

- **95%** of Hands on Learning students finish school, get an apprenticeship, or get a job

The economic benefit of Hands on Learning is plausibly more than triple the total program delivery cost

~$4.6 million total cost of delivering Hands on Learning to secondary students

Only 14 secondary students would need to be prevented from leaving school early due to Hands on Learning per year to breakeven

81% of parents believe Hands on Learning is the key reason that their child has been engaged and motivated to come to school

93% of students report Hands on Learning as the key reason they have been engaged and motivated to come to school.

95% of students were still in school, or in positive pathways, according to a Hands on Learning destinations and pathways study (2018)

* where this is an issue

Source: dandolo analysis of Hands on Learning 2021 school lists, Hands on Learning student survey data, school survey data, parent survey data, (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021), dandolo cost modelling

Hands on Learning Theory of Change

We mapped Hands on Learning's existing range of social and emotional and capabilities measures against the theory of change. We used the most relevant data to articulate the impact of the program in the pitch deck.

Theory of Change	Theory of Change Outcomes	Hands on Learning Outcomes

Intermediate Outcomes	Experience belonging and engagement at school	• School and parent survey data on whether there is improved school attendance
		• Student survey response before and after Hands on Learning on:
		  • Whether they enjoy school
		  • Whether school matters to them
		• Student survey response before and after Hands on Learning to:
		  • "I feel included at school"
		  • "I feel listened to at school"

	Develop strong social and emotional skills	• Student survey data on whether the following behaviours improved / gotten worse:
		  • Ability to be calm and manage my feelings
		  • Whether their behaviour in the classroom has improved
		  • Their ability to solve problems when completing work tasks
		  • Whether they are able t o work positively with a range of students
		  • Whether they can communicate and talk to other people

Ultimate Outcomes	Finish school well	• Parent survey response to whether:
		  • Their child's results in school work has improved after Hands on Learning
		  • Hands on Learning has provided their child with new work and life skills that make them more job ready
		• School survey response to whether the student's learning in the classroom has improved / gotten worse

Data sources

dandolo analysed Hands on Learning data from 2018 to 2021 across three key stakeholders across a number of critical indicator groups to articulate impact.

	Students		Parents	Schools
Collection point in time	*Before HoL*	*After HoL*	*After HoL*	*After HoL*
Demographic and program interaction data e.g. year level, program length etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social and emotional wellbeing indicators e.g. feeling included, and happy at schools etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social and emotional skill indicators e.g. communicate well and manage emotions		✓	✓	✓
School engagement indicators e.g. attendance		✓	✓	✓

Data source		Student Survey		Parents Survey	Schools Survey	
		Before HoL	After HoL			
Yearly sets of data analysed		2019 - 2021	2018-2021	2018-2021	*(total schools)*	2018-2021
Response Rate	2018 *(1714 students)*	*NA*	15%	9%	*(86 schools)*	*NA*
	2019 *(1904 students)*	43%	25%	13%	*(118 schools)*	47%
	2020 *(1723 students)*	25%	15%	15%	*(116 schools)*	9%
	2021 *(1691 students)*	38%	14%	6%	*(122 schools)*	30%
Average Margin of Error [1]		± 3%	± 4%	± 6%		± 6%[2]

Assumptions and notes

- For **social and emotional wellbeing indicators**, we were able to compare aggregated responses for students before and after they have completed Hands on Learning.
- For **other indicator groups**, where question options were phrased "never an issue", "gotten worse" or "improved" we took the percentage of responses for each category excluding "never an issue"

Margin of Error gives an indication of how representative a sample is of the whole cohort or population. The higher the margin of error, the less confident we can be that the survey responses reflect the entire cohort.

Over all three years of data collection, the surveys obtained a reasonably low margin of error.

Note 1. All margins of error calculated with a 95% confidence interval.

Note 2. Given school set is similar across years, Margin of Education calculation uses 122 school population size and a sample size of 84 (the total number of unique schools surveyed across three years of data collection)

Who participates in Hands on Learning

Hands on Learning is a methodology that delivers practical projects in schools to students as an alternative mechanism to learn social and emotional skills and support school engagement.

There are a diverse range of schools who participate in Hands on Learning

Hands on Learning has grown its school base consistently over twenty two years of operation and in 2021, 122 schools participated in the program.

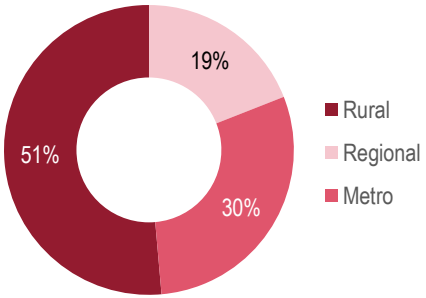
School longevity

School type

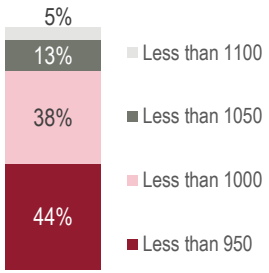
Schools span across 4 jurisdictions (QLD, NSW, Vic, Tas) and 51% of schools are considered rural and the majority are considered to be in low socio-economic areas.

Participating jurisdictions

School regionality



School ICSEA* ratings



Hands on Learning targets students who are more at risk of disengaging from traditional education.

The student cohort is more likely to be disadvantaged across a number of factors:

8%
of students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

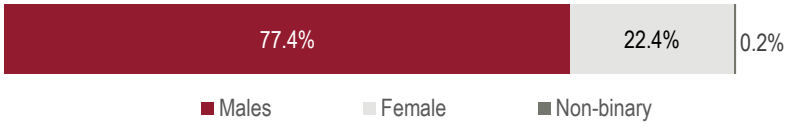
82%
Of schools are in the lowest socio-economic areas of Australia

12%
of students have a disability

2%
of students identify as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

And the majority of the student cohort is male

Gender breakdown of 2020 student cohort



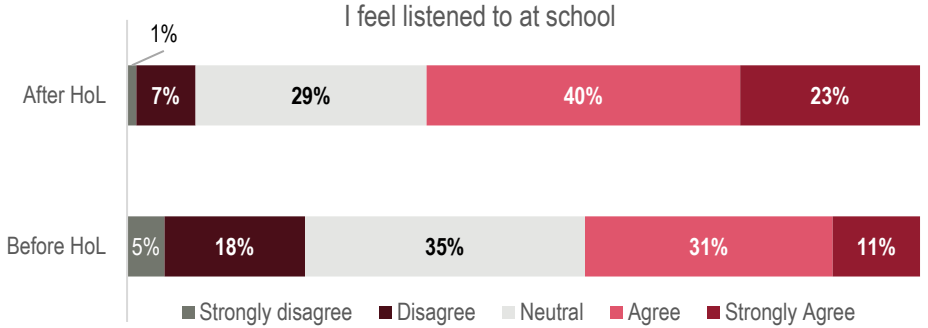
Source: dandolo analysis of Hands on Learning school survey data and Hands on Learning2021 school lists
* ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage), where 1000 is the national average.

dandolopartners

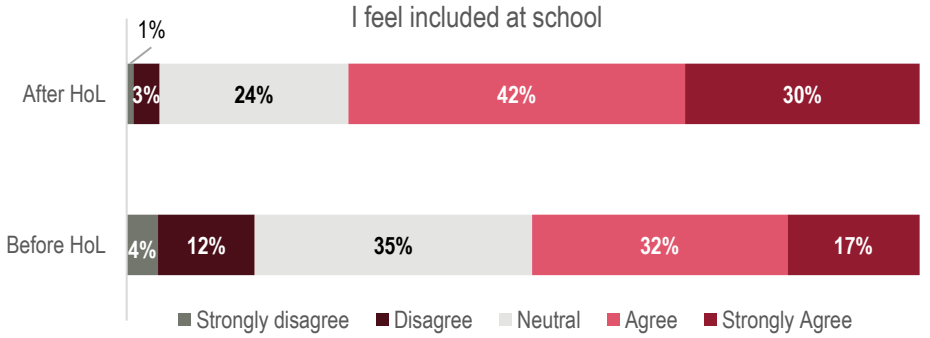
Hands on Learning outcomes – belonging and motivation for learning

These outcomes show that students experience more belonging and engagement in school after participating in Hands on Learning.

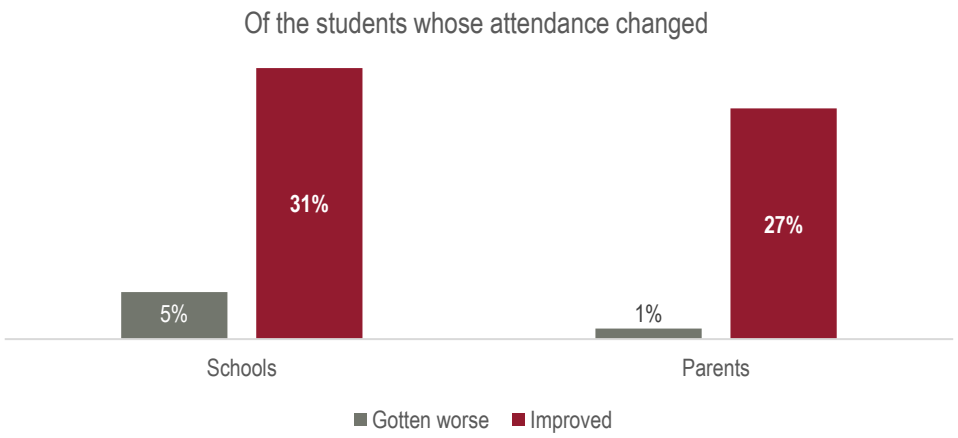
Over 60% of students agree that they feel listened to at school after Hands on Learning, a 20% increase from before they started the program.



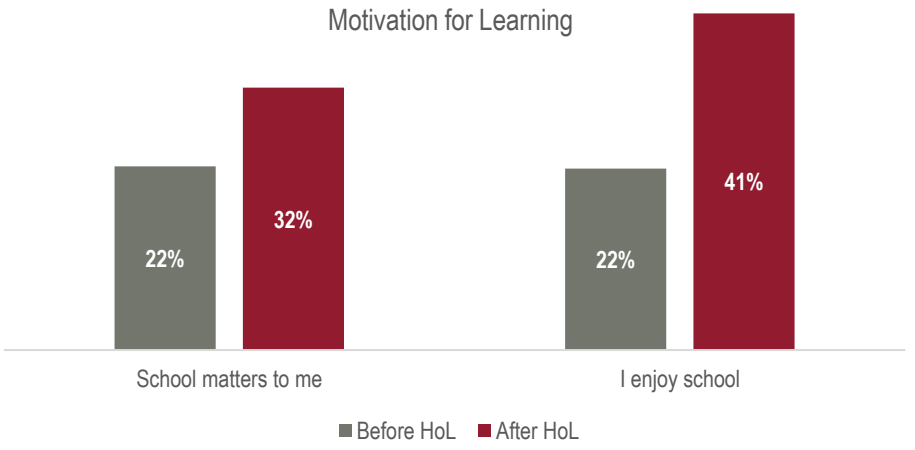
Over 70% of students reported feeling included at their school.



School reported that the attendance of 31% of students in Hands on Learning has improved, with 27% of parents reporting an improvement in attendance.



~40% of students say they enjoy school after Hands on Learning and 32% of students say that school matters to them.



Source: dandolo analysis of Hands on Learning student survey data, parent survey data, and school survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021)

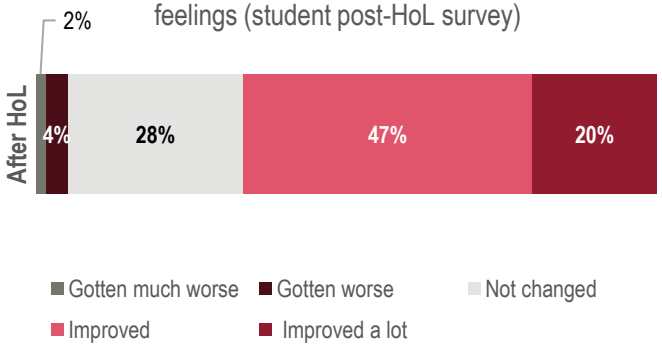
Hands on Learning outcomes – social and emotional learning

These outcomes show that students have improved their social and emotional skills through the Hands on Learning program.

Hands on Learning students have greater self-awareness and self-management.

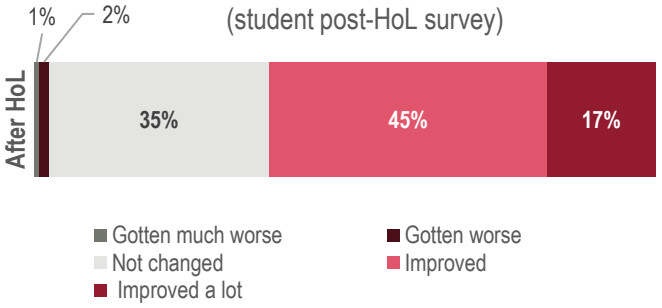
Self-Awareness

Student's ability to be calm and manage their feelings (student post-HoL survey)



Self-Management

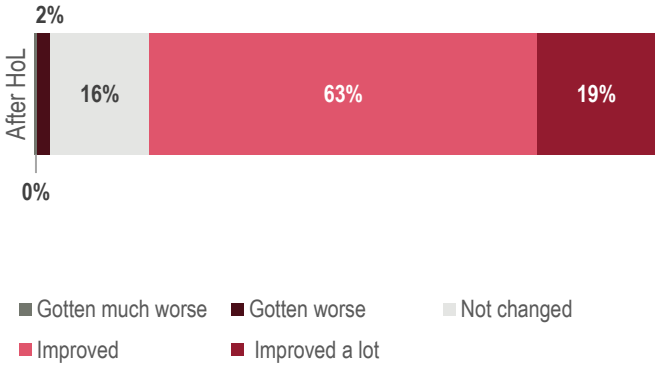
Student's behaviour (student post-HoL survey)



Their responsible decision-making improves.

Responsible Decision-Making

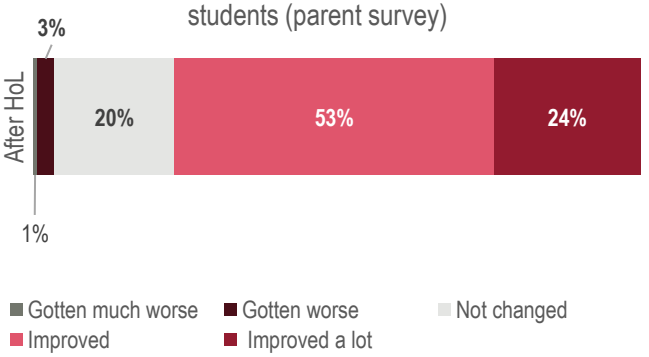
Student's ability to solve problems when completing tasks (student post-HoL survey)



And they have more social awareness and relationship skills because of participating in Hands on Learning.

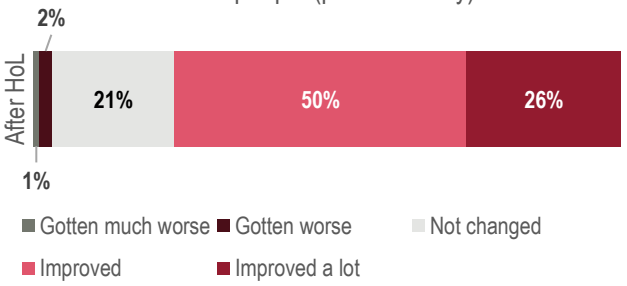
Social Awareness

Student's ability to work positively with a range of students (parent survey)



Relationship Skills

Student's ability to communicate and talk with other people (parent survey)

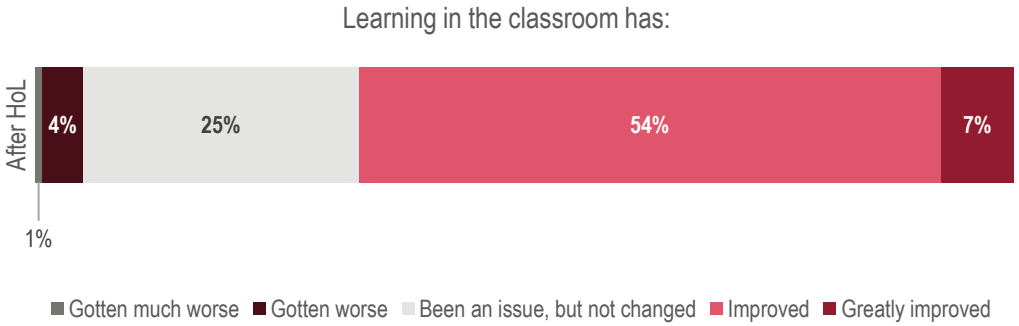


Source: dandolo analysis of Hands on Learning survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021)

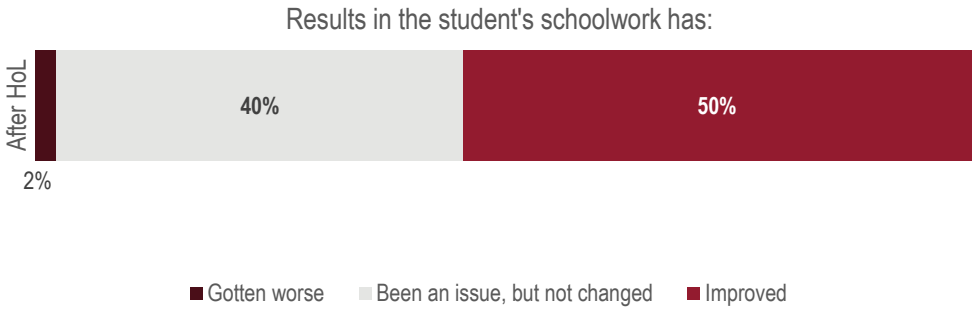
Hands on Learning outcomes – finishing school well

Hands on Learning significantly contributes to a student's ability to learn better, finish school well, and be able to transition into the workforce.

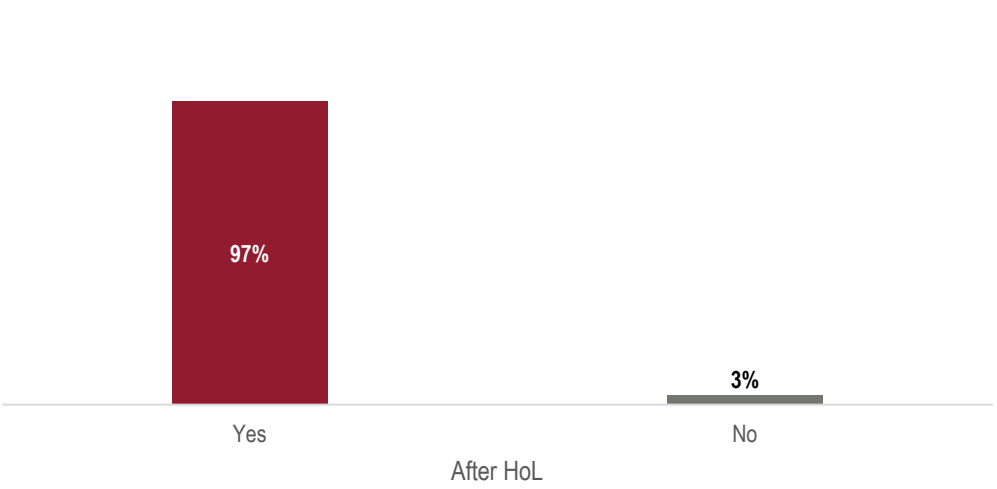
54% of parents reported that the student's ability to learn in the classroom has improved.



50% of parents reported that a student's schoolwork results has improved.



97% of parents believe that the skills their child learnt through Hands on Learning has made them better equipped to enter the workforce.



Source: dandolo analysis of HoL student survey data, parent survey data, and school survey data (aggregated over the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021)

Appendix C: Case studies

Case Study 1 – Hawkesdale College

About Hawkesdale College

Hawkesdale P12 College is a small school in rural Victoria, about three hours away from Melbourne.

Save the Children's Hands on Learning program has been part of the school's offering since 2014. Two afternoons a week, artisan-teachers take students through practical projects and focuses on students who might otherwise be disengaged from classroom-based learning.

Students have done lots of projects that contribute to the school:

- Constructing a chook pen
- Making obstacles out of timber pallets for the chickens
- Gardening and landscaping of the school grounds
- Redeveloping the outdoor space and Hands on Learning precinct with shipping containers and work benches

Hands on Learning at the School

Reasons why Hawkesdale College value Hands on Learning:

Hands on Learning is an innovative education program: Hands on Learning caters to the different ways young people learn, with student wellbeing being equally important as academic learning.

Hands on Learning fosters strong, long-term relationships that help young people: Hands on Learning helps students develop skills and abilities they will need to succeed in work and life, like: collaboration, problem solving, communication, resilience and empathy

Hands on Learning helps students with finishing school well: The program keeps students on site and in as many classes as they can. It can help them connect with apprenticeships, training, employment and a meaningful future at the end of their time at school.

"It's a safety net. Hands on Learning helps with the wellbeing of a range of students, and has worked hard to engage and re-engage students who could easily have disappeared from education."

- John, Assistant Principal

Overall experience with Hands on Learning :

"We've had six full years of delivering Hands on Learning and dozens of students have successfully moved through the program in that time"

- John, Assistant Principal

"We are able to help students get back into effective classroom learning and to apply some of the communication skills and teamwork back into their wider environment"

- Shannon, artisan-teacher

Impact of Hands on Learning

For Hawkesdale College, the most important impact for their students has been:

- Social awareness
- Communicating effectively
- Self-management

"This is what education should be about – needs based, practical, authentic learning with an impact that is life-long.

- John, Assistant Principal

The program improves student engagement and behaviour

"Disconnection from school underlies student disengagement. (Hands on Learning) helps develops strategies that make kids feel they belong and can contribute to the wider community we have a significant opportunity to keep them engaged"

- John, Assistant Principal

Crystal's story:

When Crystal started high school, it was likely she would continue her pattern of school refusal. She'd started refusing in Year 5 and had stopped attending school completely as she entered Year 7. Getting her involved in Hands on Learning proved to be the answer to getting Crystal engaged first on the school grounds, then in the classroom. It's helped build her confidence, her friendships, and given her practical skills she's looking forward to using in the future. She now attends school four days a week.

"I can definitely say that for Crystal if it wasn't for Hands on Learning there is no way she would be coming to school four days a week."

- Sam, Crystal's teacher aide

Case Study 2 – Sorell School

About Sorell School

Sorell College is a regional school in southeast Tasmania with a diverse student population. 68% of its students come from a low SES background.

They have 900 students from P-12, with many having a disability or coming from a trauma background.

Sorell School runs both the Build and Café programs.

Students have done lots of projects that contribute to the school such as:

- Building a fire pit for reconciliation week
- Building a pizza oven
- Maintenance work on school bikes, getting them into good working order
- Serving a buffet style hot lunch to the entire primary school each week where they operate Paddock to Plate

Hands on Learning at the School

Reasons why Sorell College value Hands on Learning

Hands on Learning provides an alternative learning program for Sorell's diverse student population: The regular curriculum doesn't meet the needs of all of their students. The Hands on Learning program is an opportunity for these learners to be really hands-on, giving them a real sense of purpose and a much greater sense of belonging.

Hands on Learning has a personalised, structured program that works well for disengaged students: The small artisan-teacher to student ratio and targeted Focus Plans allows students to better build relationships.

"Feeling like you are in a safe, welcoming environment is particularly important as some of our students have been impacted by trauma. I have been really pleased to see the teamwork, collaboration and leadership skills blossom and the real pathway this program creates to the future lives of these students."

- Jenny, Principal

Overall experience with Hands on Learning :

"Build has been really successful – kids who were on the verge of disengaging now attend, and they say its because of Hands on Learning"

- Jenny, Principal

"A lot of students in the program come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hands on Learning is a good environment that shows them success, and that they can be successful too."

- Scott, artisan-teacher

Impact of Hands on Learning

For Sorell College, the most important impact for their students has been:

- Relationship- building
- Teamwork
- Showing leadership in groups

"We're seeing them grow as humans and transform. By getting all day with them, we truly get to build rapport with the students and see them develop essential skills."

- Scott, artisan-teacher

The program improves student engagement and behaviour

"We don't use it as a carrot and stick - but students know if their behaviour leads to suspension they miss out on Hands on Learning. Students value Hands on Learning so much - it has definitely helped them to moderate their behaviour."

- Jenny, Principal

Chloe's story:

Chloe was close to dropping out in Grade 8. Three years and many achievements later, being part of the Hands on Learning program has enabled Chloe to be a real leader with practical skills who works hard and gets the job done. It was through this program that Chloe could see what was possible in her future.

"Being part of Hands on Learning has opened my eyes to what is possible and in front of me in my life. Hands on Learning is a safe space you go one day a week, the teachers are great, you can have a chat, and get to know other people and yourself better. It's helped me learn to work in a team. It's helped me stay at school. It's helped me communicate more confidently" - **Chloe, Student**

Case Study 3 – St Pius X Parish School Warrnambool

About St Pius X Parish School

St Pius X Parish School is primary school located in Warrnambool, regional Victoria. The school joined the Hands on Learning program in 2020.

St Pius X Parish School runs the Build program.

Students have done lots of projects that contribute to the school:

Painting the school fence and working on fence paling self-portrait

Running community projects such as setting up Cancer Council Australia's Biggest Morning Tea

Creating, designing, and decorating kites

Constructing blackboards with wooden frames around them

Hands on Learning at the School

Reasons why St Pius X Parish School value Hands on Learning:

Hands on Learning is a program that can improve student engagement and behaviour: St Pius X Parish School had a difficult cohort of students with behavioural needs and was seeking a program that would help them transition well into senior school.

Hands on Learning enables students to finish school well: The program serves as an intervention for kids who may not have gotten the necessary social and emotional skills through traditional schooling.

Hands on Learning provides a robust framework that would improve social and emotional learning: The program gave the school a structure to engage students with Focus Plans, a small student-artisan teacher ratio, and practical projects.

"Hands on Learning is about giving students important social and emotional skills that will sustain them when things get rough. It's about students building relationships with one another and for students to know that each of them have their own special talent." **Adele, Program Coordinator**

Overall experience with Hands on Learning :

"I get stressed easily. When I'm in the shed, it takes the stress away and I'm able to make friends."
- Hands on Learning Student

"Hands on Learning provides us with that extra bit of structure, rigour, and intentionality in developing a student's SEL skills."
- Adele, Program Coordinator

Impact of Hands on Learning

For St Pius X Parish School the most important impact for their students has been:

- Managing their own emotions
- Building relationship with others
- Building their confidence and self esteem

"Hands on Learning is a time of the week where they are able to experience success. It's really important for these kids to feel that, especially if they haven't felt like they could do that."
-Joe, Principal

The program improves student engagement and behaviour

"We have a group of senior children who struggle in terms of their behaviour and ability to engage in academic tasks. They started Hands on Learning this year and what we are seeing is the most positive change imaginable. We are seeing positive relationships being created with each other, and a maintaining of focus during the school week that they wouldn't have had."
- Joe, Principal

A student's story:

"We have a little boy who was quite volatile and gets emotionally heightened easily. He would exit the classroom and not want to come back. He can get stressed quite easily and wants to get out of doing work. Lockdown hasn't been easy for him either.

After some time in the program we've seen a real change in him. He's able to come to the program happy and able to make friendships with others. A lot of kids compliment him on his ability and they all support one another."
– Adele, Program Coordinator

Case Study 4 – Traralgon College

About Traralgon College

Traralgon College is a regional secondary school of around 1000 students in the Latrobe Valley, Victoria. They have implemented the Hands on Learning program for over 10 years.

Traralgon College runs the Build program.

Students have done lots of projects that contribute to the school:

Refurbishing front garden of school. And moving and replanting veggie garden beds

Building a recycled can collection bin and a recycled plastic bottle hothouse – also raised money through the recycling program

Renovating metal work room – painting metal room and a classroom

Making picnic tables for the school lunch area

Hands on Learning at the School

Reasons why Traralgon College value Hands on Learning:

Hands on Learning gives opportunities for students who are struggling in school, or who are disengaged: Hands on Learning caters for the stimulations and learning needs of disengaged students and is one of the few places at school where students get to see the product of their labour, allowing them to feel a real sense of achievement and success.

Hands on Learning helps students to socialise with others and develop positive relationships with others: By partaking in hands-on projects, students learn how to work in a team environment, helping them to reconnect with the school system.

"When students are in Hands on Learning, they can see a different light towards school and working. It's not just a place to run amuck. We treat them like adults. They've got roles, responsibilities, and tasks set out for them. They've got an expectation from us and they take that on."

- Nathan, artisan-teacher

Overall experience with Hands on Learning :

"The Hands on Learning artisan-teachers are great role models. Having Hands on Learning at the start of the week makes it that much easier for the students to carry on for the rest of their school week."

- Tina, Parent

"Some students come to us saying they think they're stupid and we say, no, you just need to learn something in a different way and find something you're interested in. Hands on Learning allows them to do that."

- Adele, Hands on Learning Coordinator

Impact of Hands on Learning

For Traralgon College the most important impact for their students has been:

- Emotional regulation
- Ability to manage conflict
- Practicing teamwork

"The program is not just about building things or gardening. It's about improving their emotional capabilities. They learn manners. They learn how to behave in social settings. They learn how to work together and relate to others. It's about how to behave in the real world."

-Adele, Hands on Learning Coordinator

The program improves student engagement and behaviour in the following ways:

"The Focus Plans at the heart of the Hands on Learning day really makes students aware of specific behaviours they need to target and strategies they can use to improve. The focus on them at the beginning of the Hands on Learning day and reflection at the end is really valuable."

- Helmut, Teacher

Jayden's story:

In his third year of Hands on Learning, Year 9 student Jayden has changed his attitude to school. Back in Year 7, Jayden didn't want to go to school – his mum notes that he had to be dragged to school and sometimes he was "exited from class". Three years on, Jayden loves his Hands on Learning days and is happy to go to school on days even when he is not in Hands on Learning. Both his parent and artisan-teachers comment that Jayden has become a real leader – helping his peers, completing projects early, and answering reflection questions thoughtfully - a real testament to the impact of Hands on Learning.

My confidence has increased and that helps me to make more friends. I love the teamwork, the cooking, and the volunteering. It makes you feel good.- **Jayden, Student**

Case Study 5 – Surf Coast College

About Surf Coast College

Surf Coast College is a rural secondary school located in Torquay, Victoria. Founded in 2012 to respond to the expanding community, the College established Hands on Learning during 2016.

Surf Coast College runs the Build program.

Students have done lots of projects that contribute to the school:

- Creating an outdoor chess board area
- Designing and constructing a skateboard rack alongside refurbishing the shipping container at the skate park
- Prepping for and laying new turf
- Helped the elderly with their gardens

Hands on Learning at the School

Reasons why Surf Coast College value Hands on Learning:

Hands on Learning has a proven methodology and is a 20-year-long evidence based program: There is a measurable level of accountability and data collection which shows that the program works to help students develop skills in an alternative program.

Hands on Learning helps students gain work experience through practical projects: Staff noted that if it hadn't been for Hands on Learning, some students would fall off the radar or disappear. The program gives them direction about a potential pathway after school and give them a goal for something to work towards. It also enables them to learn what they do and don't like and what they want to do in the future.

"We need programs that are built for the diversity of learners. If we want to lift literacy, numeracy and academic performance – wellbeing, school connection and belonging come first.. Students need to be happy at school and if they are happy, they will be better leaners. Hands on Learning helps with that.."

- Peter, wellbeing team

Impact of Hands on Learning

For Surf Coast College the most important impact for their students has been:

- Building belonging
- Strengthening their self-worth
- Engaging in learning

""Our students feel connected in the Hands On Learning program, it gives them a sense of belonging and helps them to feel connected to their school and community through the valued contributions and visible changes that their work creates. This sense of belonging and self-worth translates back to their classes as we see the students engaging better in their learning with a sense of purpose and an improved self-esteem to give things a go and try to be the best version of themselves."

-Erin, Principal

The program improves student engagement and behaviour:

"The program allows them to be who they are. By having such high contact time with students, we learn about their lives. For kids who may not have positive role models, this becomes like a minor family. The program gives time and space to build really meaningful relationships with students, which helps increase their feeling of belonging."

- Adam and James, artisan-teachers

A student's story:

"We had one student who was having a bit of trouble and wanted to get into the program. The Vice Principal told him that he could get in, but he's got to give back. After a couple of years in the program, he's become a really strong leader. He told us he feels calmer in himself, doing tiny things better in the classroom, and even having an improved relationship with his dad. He also models good behaviour. He knows that if he's doing the right thing, his mates around him will do the right too. He knows he's a bit of a leader so he wants to make the right decision." – **Adam and James, artisan-teachers**

Case Study 6 – Lowood State High School

About Lowood State High School

Lowood State High School is a secondary school located in rural Queensland, around 65 kilometres west of Brisbane. Accommodating over 700 students from the surrounding area, the school implemented Hands on Learning in 2018.

Lowood State High School runs the Build program.

Students have done lots of projects that contribute to the school:

- Constructing toolboxes
- Participating in creative outdoor art projects on the Hands on Learning containers
- Redevelopment of the outdoor space and Hands on Learning precinct with shipping containers and work benches
- Preparation, construction and planting out of the Hands on Learning garden

Hands on Learning at the School

Reasons why Lowood State High School value Hands on Learning:

- **Hands on Learning gives students a head start to work experiences:** By partaking in practical projects, students not only develop technical skills but also learn about how to work collaboratively in a team, be responsible for their tasks, and problem solve, all of which will be beneficial as they transition into employment pathways.
- **Hands on Learning's structured program allows better connections between artisan-teacher and student that helps students engage in school:** In the program, artisan-teachers get to spend a whole day with students, while other student engagement programs do not. Having a dedicated day where artisan-teachers can work with students in smaller groups gives teachers enough time to really get to know the group, build rapport with them, and foster meaningful relationships. This is especially beneficial for disengaged students who may have not felt listened to or felt included in their school environment before.

Overall experience with Hands on Learning :

"Our students are really engaged in the Hands on Learning program. We had conversations with students who just weeks ago would have struggled to say hello but that now were the first to talk about what they had been doing and share their own ideas for next year and what they can achieve. I can't say enough positive things about Hands on Learning."- **Sherree, Deputy Principal**

Impact of Hands on Learning

For Lowood State High School the most important impact for their students has been:

- Self awareness
- Responsible decision making
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency

"Hands on Learning really helps students to build skills that they need to focus on to be better young adults." - **Dennis, artisan-teacher**

The program improves student engagement and behaviour in the following ways:

"The Focus Plans have really helped to improve student engagement and behaviour. They have a sheet that they work on where they set out their goals, why they matter, and what to work on in themselves. Doing this process helps students to evaluate themselves and reflect about their behaviour and actions which really increases their self-awareness" **- Sherree , Deputy Principal**

A student's story:

"We had one student who started at Grade 2 level who was shy and didn't have any friends as she came into Hands on Learning. She would hover around the teacher in the playground and you can tell she was struggling socially. She really struggled in the classroom too. In Hands on Learning, she was a completely different person. Her confidence grew so much – she would have a go at anything, was great on the tools, built confidence, and formed relationships with the other Hands on Learning kids." - **Sherree and Dennis**

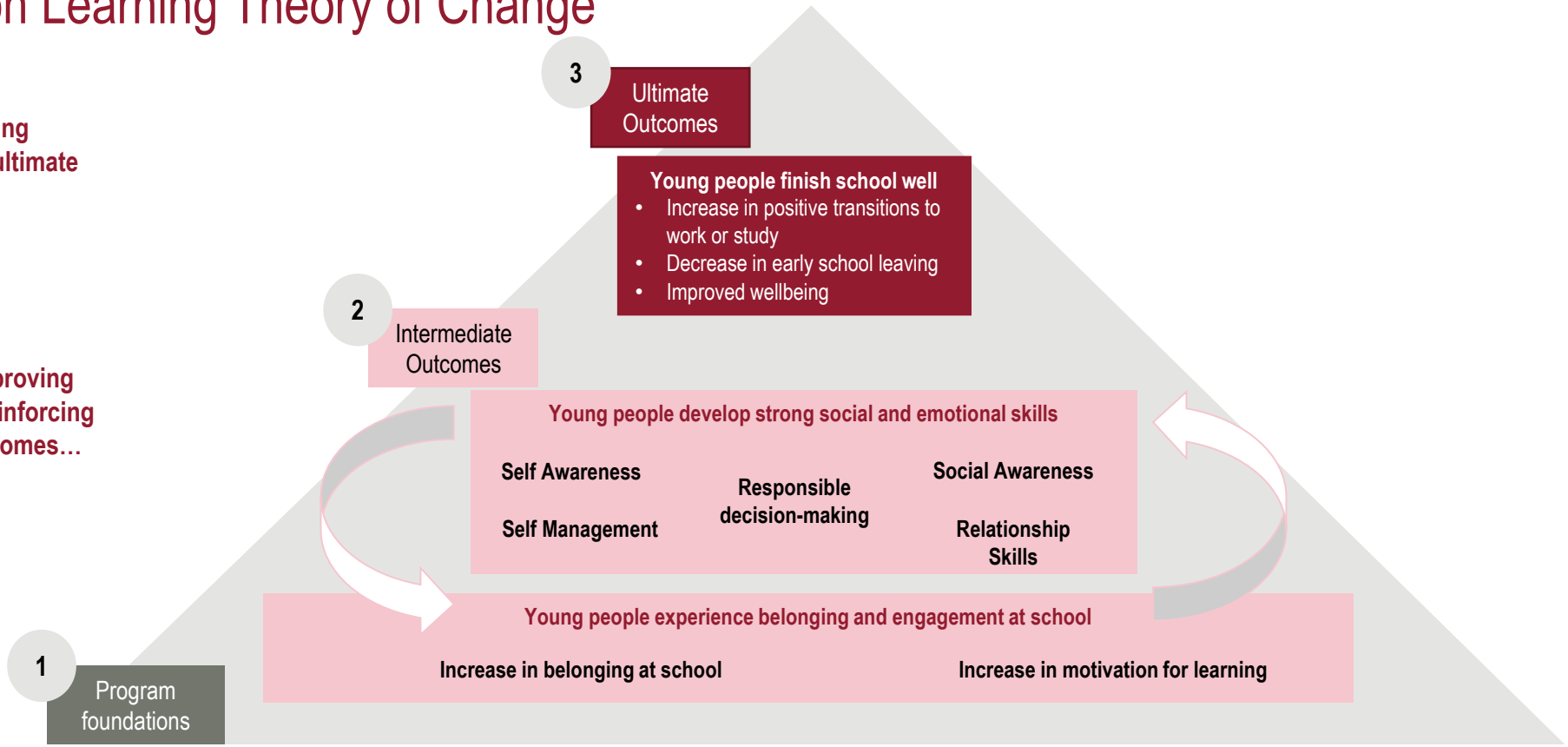
Appendix D: Theory of Change

Hands on Learning Theory of Change

Hands on Learning achieves these ultimate outcomes …

We do this by improving these mutually reinforcing intermediate outcomes…

We enable this by delivering these program foundations …



For students who are disengaged from the classroom and school, Hands on Learning provides:	**A place to belong** • A dedicated, safe space within the school, and • A place they contribute to building, developing and maintaining	**People to belong to** • A small group of <10 students, • Two artisan-teachers skilled at relationship-building, • Working together for up to the whole day, and for at least two terms	**Real things to do** • The chance to design and deliver projects with purpose, • While developing practical skills	**A chance to give back** • Contributing to the community, • While supporting peers
	Reflective practice via Focus Plans that establish goals, guide learning and structure feedback			
For schools, Hands on Learning provides:	**An effective strategy for engaging students** via: A clear methodology, structured and ongoing implementation support, professional development and mentoring for artisan-teachers, learning portal with tools and resources, ongoing data collection			

Appendix E: Program Logic

Hands on Learning Program logic

Inputs

School inputs
- Hiring and managing two artisan-teachers
- Space within the school
- Funding for materials
- Selection of students
- Feedback loops between HoL and classroom teachers

Hands on Learning inputs
- A clear methodology
- Structured and ongoing implementation support
- Professional development and mentoring for artisan-teachers
- Learning portal with tools and resources

Activities
What the program involves

A place to belong
- A dedicated, safe space within the school, and
- A place they contribute to building, developing and maintaining

People to belong to
- A small group of <10 students,
- Two artisan-teachers skilled at relationship-building,
- Working together for the whole day, and for at least two terms

Real things to do
- The chance to design and deliver projects with purpose,
- While developing practical skills

A chance to give back
- Contributing to the community,
- While supporting peers

Reflective practice via Focus Plans that establish goals, guide learning and structure feedback

Support for schools
- Structured and ongoing implementation support
- Professional development and mentoring for artisan-teacher
- Learning portal with tools and resources
- Support for data collection and analysis

Outputs
What outputs have been produced and used

Target cohort
- Number of students participating in HOL, demographics and reasons for referral

A place to belong and People to belong to
- Ratio of students to artisan-teachers
- Hours per week of participation
- Length of participation

(per-school and for all of HoL)

Real things to do and a chance to give back
- Number of projects completed
- Proportion of projects that add value to the school
- Proportion of projects that add value to the community

Reflective practice
- Proportion of students with active Focus Plan
- Proportion of schools that routinely provide structured feedback

Support for schools
- Number of professional learning and mentoring activities held
- Number of participants in professional learning and mentoring activities
- Number of people accessing learning portal
- Proportion of schools providing full datasets

Intermediate Outcomes
What are the effects of the program on its users?

Young people experience belonging and engagement at school

Belonging
- Students feel included and listened to at school
- Students believe there are adults they can talk to
- Students are treated with respect
- Students feel like they belong at their school

Motivation for learning
- Improved school attendance
- Students feel that what they are learning at school is meaningful
- Students are confident as learners

Young people develop strong social and emotional skills

Self awareness
- Students know what their strengths are
- Students can recognise emotions

Self-management
- Students can manage and regulate their emotions
- Students can set goals and show persistence

Responsible decision-making
- Students can plan and understand consequences
- Students can make good decisions

Social awareness
- Students can understand the perspective of others
- Students can offer help when needed

Relationship skills
- Students can get along with others
- Students can manage conflict well

Ultimate Outcomes

Young people finish school well

Positive transitions to work or study
- Students finish Year 12 and/or transition to work or study

Decrease in early school leaving
- Students in Hands on Learning stay in school

Improved wellbeing
- Students have improved family relationships
- Students have good self-reported wellbeing