

From a high school teachers perspective, there will always be a small percentage of students who have completely disengaged and no matter what you do as the teacher the student refuses help, refuses to do any work and does not care what the consequences are. Many of these students have social - emotional issues such as mental health, family issues and / or trauma. More psychological support for students in high school would help these students immensely. Some of their families would also benefit from support - financial, psychological etc. Some students become disengaged from societal and family pressures to succeed and what 'success' looks like.

A school based verification process needs to be in place for Government run schools to have students with suspected learning disabilities tested. Catholic schools can start the process and testing so why can't Government? I had a year 9 student in a remote Catholic high school who had gone through the State primary system. As his English teacher, I suspected he had a learning disability early into term 1 so commenced the paperwork and submitted it to our learning support teacher to get the verification process started. When I spoke to his mother to gain her permission to move forward with the process, she was elated. She told me that she had repeatedly asked teachers at the State school and was told that he was too old to be tested. It took until term 3 but he came back as being intellectually impaired and up until this point I had had no option but to give him the same assessment as his peers. The poor boy had repeatedly failed academically, saw no point in trying and often misbehaved to hide his academic struggles. He was a different child after being verified, growing in confidence massively, finally able to achieve modified work and gain the help he so desperately needed.

Many students are undiagnosed and are unable to be provided with modified assessment due to the constraints of the education system. Some students are undiagnosed due to parents not wanting their child to be 'labelled' and others because the parents don't know where to start or think it's the schools responsibility. Having a clear system in place where educators and parents feel empowered to voice their opinion and seek these students the help they need is needed.

Unfortunately, many parents have become verbally abusive and threatening so many educators simply give up because if the parent/s don't care why should I. I had one parent say to, 'what do you want me to do about it?' when I called regarding her daughters behaviour and lack of effort in class. When I called again a few days later she threatened to go to the principal if I called again. On another occasion, I've repeatedly called one parent (Y7 English) to discuss her child's disturbing behaviour and suspected dysgraphia. I left repeated voicemails and sent emails and she never replied. The school tried to set up a meeting with her on two occasions as so many of his teachers had gone to leadership regarding his disturbing behaviours, she cancelled both times, AFTER the meeting was supposed to start. This student was failing in all subjects and didn't care if he failed or if he was punished for his behaviours. Many of his educators suspected neglect and saw the behaviours as attention seeking. As his English teacher, I highly suspected he had dysgraphia based on his handwriting alone.

These are only a few of the issues I have personally faced but these students all fall in the 5% of students failing. Though, there are many more stories. I was told in my first year of teaching, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink, it has always resonated with me.