

Purposeful Partnering

A summary for business

Enabling students to thrive in today's complex world

In a rapidly changing world, many of today's school students will be the job seekers or creators of jobs that are yet to even exist. Each student needs to develop the knowledge, skills and capabilities, and the experiences and confidence to succeed in this complex environment.

School-business partnering is key. *Purposeful Partnering* provides a rich mix of guidance on why and how diverse ways of engaging together can and already are positioning students to thrive.

“I encourage other businesses to engage constructively with schools through purposeful partnering so together we can meet the challenges of a new world of work, and support young people to achieve their best.”

Frank Calabria
Chief Executive Officer, Origin Energy; and Origin Energy Foundation Board member.

“We have learnt major lessons in the power of strategic partnering to promote student learning, agency, family engagement and opportunity.

It is being done. It can be done.”

Christine Cawsey, AM
Principal, Rooty Hill High School, western Sydney, NSW; Non-Executive Director, The Smith Family.

Working together is in everyone's interest

Businesses and schools *want* and *need* to be partnering.

Businesses are grappling with skills shortages and challenges and disruptors are shaping the context for Australian students. These include deepening inequities in the education experience, a rapidly changing job market, and recognition that students rightfully want a say in the educational choices that affect their present and all our futures.

Educational opportunity does not distribute equally in Australia. Each young Australian needs to connect with those they need, when they need, and in ways most useful to each of them in making their own learning, working and active citizenship choices. This needs to happen across their lifespan and intergenerationally across families.

Partnering benefits students *and* adults

The case for school-business partnering is strong.

Working directly together or through other experts, can reap multiple and mutual benefits.

Seven evidenced benefits for students can also have a flow-on effect for adults. One or more of these benefits can come to life in new and interesting ways for people from business:

- **Improving learning** - new knowledge, skills, capabilities and dispositions (e.g. Business volunteers mentoring students can challenge people from business in new ways of thinking and improve their communication skills while helping students do the same)

“These students are your future customers and employees and so on. So, surely it makes strategic sense to tap into these voices early?”

Kate Kennerson
Year 12 teacher, Rooty Hill High School

“If we consider the productivity benefits flowing from well-being and motivation, as well as brand and CSR [Corporate Social Responsibility] value, volunteering may be one of the best investments an employer can make.”

The value of volunteering, 2021, p. 5.

- **Inspiring possibilities** – considering new choices and/or directions, lifting ambitions (e.g. Mentoring students, this can improve employee promotion).
- **Building confidence** – expressing ideas, passions, aspirations (e.g. Businesses and schools co-designing workshops can build confidence of employees when working with students).
- **Enabling greater participation** – pursuing career ambitions, autonomy, equity and co-designed learning (e.g. Through school-based and post-school internships businesses can tap into a greater diversity of perspectives and talent).
- **Becoming empathetic** – new and deepening understandings of stereotypes and barriers to social connectedness (e.g. Through authentic employer engagement opportunities designed to break down gender stereotypes).
- **Broadening connections** – accessing new expertise, building new networks (e.g. Through working *with* students on business-related learning challenges).
- **Deepening engagement** – positive associations with school and work, and businesses (e.g. By engaging meaningfully with schools, this can improve employee retention).

Engaging together for impact

Partnering is dynamic, changing over time to meet a variety of needs. People are coming to school-business partnering with different experiences, capability and capacity.

International partnering principles can guide ‘the what’ and ‘the how’:

- **Equity – building respect:** Recognise the expertise people bring from schools and business. **Practice tip:** Be open to seeing new roles and ways to contribute.
- **Transparency and trust – developing strong relationships:** Transparency builds trust; trust builds commitment. **Practice tip:** Give visibility and value to volunteering across the education stages.
- **Mutual benefit – creating value for all:** Leaders pay attention to why they want and/or need to engage together (e.g. personal, professional, beyond self-benefit), as well as how to build and measure partnering cultures. **Practice tip:** Consider mentoring, hosting people from schools or sharing career stories and Q&A, through to career expos. Students benefit from exposure to multiple meaningful experiences across every educational stage.

A challenge: Scoping who to connect with and in what ways can be an early hurdle to overcome. **Practice tip:** Map employees’ existing relations as alumni or work through existing expertise of school networks and student program providers (e.g. Australian Business Community Network, Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship, Beacon Foundation, Ourschool alumni, Social Ventures Australia, the school leadership associations, The Smith Family, ‘Together4Youth’.)

Creating *impactful* ways of partnering ‘takes a village’. Together, school and business leaders are in strong positions to recognise and use their expertise.

Businesses partnering purposefully with students and their schools should be a normal educational experience for *each* student, *anywhere* in Australia. Starting early at *every* stage of education is key.

“I always say I got where I am today through a little bit of luck and lots of hard work. Whereas, I think I should have also been able to get ‘here’ by design.”

Sally-Ann Williams, CEO, Cicada Innovations.