

Part 1 excerpt on the
multiple and mutual
benefits of partnering

Purposeful Partnering

How school-business partnering can
make a difference for students



The best thing businesses can do is provide
the context of 'real-world' problems...

***Dr Alan Finkel, AC,
Australia's former Chief Scientist***

Produced by Interface2Learn for

 **origin energy
foundation**

Thank you

The enabler for this piece is Origin Energy Foundation

Saying thank you is one of the most rewarding tasks. The people we thank are many. They come from different places and perspectives. We connected through formal and informal interactions. These include people with whom we did in-depth interviews (e.g. David Gonski) and those who we joined during workshops (e.g. the Rural Youth Ambassadors, Country Education Partnership), or at forums (e.g. the Australian Financial Review 2020 Business Summit; #Teachmeet online - #Leadmeet 2021).

To you all, thank you for being generous with your time, insights and examples.¹

Please cite the full paper as: Anderson, M., Curtin, E., Butler, S. & Gartmann, S. (2022). *Purposeful Partnering: How school-business partnering can make a difference for students*. Origin Energy Foundation, Origin Energy, New South Wales.

Dr Michelle Anderson, Interface2Learn, is a researcher, facilitator and former teacher with a passion for learning-focused partnering. **Dr Emma Curtin** is a writer, researcher and editor with a passion for education across all sectors. **Sharon Butler** is an organisational development consultant across sectors, with a passion for family-school partnering. **Sigi Gartmann** is an economist and public policy specialist with a passion to make a difference, progress social change and positively impact on people's lives.

This document contains **Part 1 of the full Purposeful Partnering paper.**

Part 1 provides guidance on:

- Who benefits from school-business partnering?
- What types of benefits and outcomes can partnering reap for students and adults?
- What do the benefits and outcomes look like when evidenced?

Cover photo: Students from Roma State College, Queensland engaging with Origin Energy volunteers.

This publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.



Term:

Throughout this paper, school-business **partnering** describes a dynamic suite of relations – networking, cooperating and collaborating. The type and combination of relations depicted are voluntary, intentional and change over time. Partnering interactions can come in different forms – mentoring, sharing career stories via Q&As and quizzes, hosting students or businesses on-site, learning challenges and career expos.

There is no 'right' model of a school business relationship.² Purpose is what drives why and how schools and businesses choose and need to engage together to provide benefits to students and create value beyond self-benefit.

¹**Disclaimer:** The full base paper lists names. The purpose of listing names is to respectfully acknowledge those who have influenced the thinking so far. We note, however, listing names is not an indication that everyone in that list agrees with all or parts of this document's content.

²Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2012). *Evaluate to grow*.

Table of Contents

Thank you	i
Executive summary	2
Our position	4
Two leaders, one message: Partnering makes a difference for students	5
Preface	7
Part 1: Benefits	8
Partnering benefits students and adults	8
Seven benefits for students, families, schools, business	9
Success criteria for each benefit	9
Illustrations from practice	15
Part 2: Why it is important for schools and businesses to work together	16
Working together - an imperative for more than 30 years	16
Reasons to want to work together	17
Seven challenges and disruptors	19
Illustrations from practice	36
Part 3: Building a partnering culture	40
Partnering requires capability and capacity	40
Partnering is a mindset	41
Three metrics for measuring your partnering	42
Three core partnering principles – equity; transparency and trust; mutual benefit	42
Developing capability and capacity	47
Illustrations from practice	51
Part 4: Meaningful ways to engage with students	55
Five effective ways businesses engage with students	55
Promoting student voice, autonomy and agency	61
Eight stories across education stages	63
Addressing students’ questions	72
Part 5: Four key messages for making a difference	73
From intent to action to impact	73
Message 1: Get the excellence and equity settings right	73
Message 2: Set a positive ambitious goal for businesses engaging with students and their schools	74
Message 3: Publicly recognise how both educational and business expertise is making a difference	74
Message 4: Sustaining equitable, trusting and mutually beneficial partnering is the benchmark	74
Illustrations of key strategic partnering actions	75
Appendix 1: Industries	80
Appendix 2: ‘The Partnering Wheel’	81
Appendix 3: Literature synthesis of educator-employer related literature	83

Our position

‘It takes a village’

Partnering has always been important. In recent years it’s become a must for all.

It is our shared responsibility to ensure each young Australian is able to connect with those who they need, when they need, and in ways most useful to each of them in making their own learning, working and active citizenship choices.

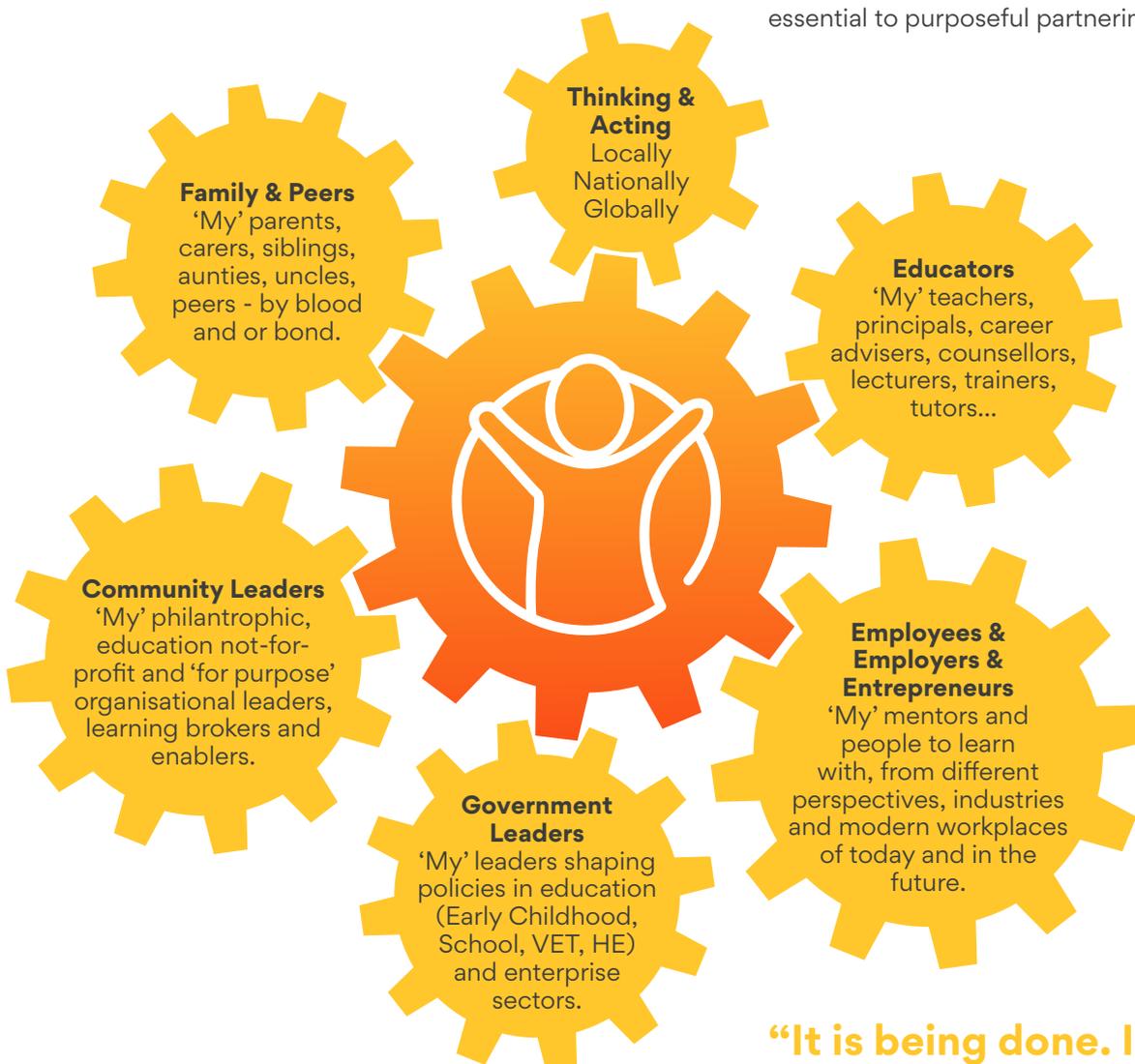
#Lifelong and #Lifewide Learning with a suite of people directly and indirectly over time.

Adults have an important responsibility to work *with* students to model and enact strategies of learning, respect for self, respect for others; and respect for the future.⁸

‘It takes a village’ is more than just a catchphrase⁹; it is a collective obligation.

Being open to exploring and experimenting and then acting to do things differently is key.

Together, school and business leaders are in really good positions to recognise and use their expertise for driving and building the trusting cultures essential to purposeful partnering.



“It is being done. It can be done.”¹⁰

⁸ Informed by Emeritus Professor John Hattie ‘The Art of Teaching Podcast’ interview with Mathew Green, 30 June 2021.

⁹ The Lancet. (2020). ‘A future for the world’s children?’

¹⁰ Western Sydney, Rooty Hill High School’s evidenced position. It is also our (author) evidenced position.

Two leaders, one message:

Partnering makes a difference for students

Two highly respected leaders, Christine Cawsey, AM and Frank Calabria, write directly to their peers in education and business. Together, Christine and Frank's messages urge educational and business leaders to engage in purposeful partnering because it makes a difference for students.



**Christine
Cawsey, AM**

Principal, Rooty Hill High School, western Sydney, New South Wales; Non-Executive Director, The Smith Family; and Immediate past Non-Executive Director, The Greater Western Sydney Giants, Australian Football League (AFL) Club.

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.” These were the words used in our submission to ‘the Shergold’ review of senior secondary pathways to illustrate the impact of existing partnering work on student post-school transitions at Rooty Hill High School.¹¹

Our submission recognised that our students were using their engagement with business mentors, programs and initiatives to take greater agency over their own learning and transition pathways. We had replaced traditional notions of career education with multiple and deep entrepreneurial learning experiences across Years 7-12, encouraging students to explore School Based Traineeships, vocational certificate training, volunteering and part-time work for inclusion in their senior programs of study.

Schools can keep doing what they did in the past and will be forgiven if this makes little difference. At Rooty Hill High School we know that identifying and

implementing new ways of working and new practices *will* make a difference for students. Partnering makes a difference.

As part of the school's Strategic Plan, we identified key organisations whose values, mindsets and ways of working encouraged strategic partnering. The willingness of the leaders of those organisations to work with our staff and students to co-design and deliver innovative “work and enterprise” learning was one of the keys to our school making a shift towards next practice. In an annual review conversation with the leaders of each partner initiative, it became evident that the partnering relationship *itself* added value. Together we gained an understanding of each other's professional context and commitment, finding the best ways to work together and observing changes in student confidence, attitudes, knowledge, skills and transitions.

Students in western Sydney come from a diverse set of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including a large Aboriginal community. Many are bilingual and they all bring a diverse set of skills to their learning. These students rely (more than most) on the networks and opportunities created by their schools, their teachers and those who work with them. Many work hard to take up every one of those opportunities. When students plan to transition from school to employment, traineeships, apprenticeships or university pathways, many are “first in family”.

Rooty Hill High School now holds six years of post-school destination data to demonstrate that having the mentoring, support, expertise and encouragement of key business, not-for-profit and university partners makes a measurable difference.

¹¹Education Council. (2020). *Looking to the future*. Also known as the Shergold review - Professor Peter Shergold, AC, Chancellor of Western Sydney University chaired the senior secondary pathways national review.

“When businesses and schools engage constructively together, we can meet the challenges of a new world of work, and young people have the greatest opportunities to achieve their best.”



Frank Calabria

A message from Frank Calabria Chief Executive Officer, Origin Energy; Director of the Australian Energy Council and the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association; and Origin Energy Foundation Board member.

When working with young people and their schools, we are challenged by new thinking.

As the world takes action to combat climate change and transition to a lower-emissions future, we remain focused on our purpose to get energy right for our customers, communities and planet.

The challenges we face in our industry are not unique. Society is undergoing the most significant disruption in the world of work since the industrial revolution. Many of today’s school students will eventually be employed in jobs that have yet to be created.

Some young people and their families could see the emerging world of work as a threat rather than an opportunity.

These circumstances present shared challenges for both schools and businesses.

How do teachers enable young people to prepare for the unknown? What should be prioritised in the curriculum?

How does the business community learn to quickly and effectively share with young people and their schools the skills and behaviours needed for the roles that are only now emerging?

Working together makes sense.

At Origin we have seen how mutually beneficial relationships with schools can be.

Given the nature of our business, we have many employees across STEM disciplines. By volunteering, our employees are able to work with teachers, bringing alive the STEM curriculum with real-world examples. Our volunteers have worked with more than 20,000 school students.

When working with young people and their schools, we are challenged by new thinking. When we hosted an international gathering of entrepreneurs working on disruptive technologies, we invited members of the Young Entrepreneurs Program and their teachers from Rooty Hill High School in western Sydney to join. The result was a remarkable session bringing together entrepreneurs, industry experts and students; where age and experience were eclipsed by original thinking.

These activities have given us a new respect for the work of teachers and the capacity of young people.

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 enable young people to achieve their best.

Preface

This preface introduces and sets the scene for the rest of the paper.

Who? The paper's primary audiences are school and business senior leaders (including the leaders of organisations with whom schools and businesses choose to engage). Philanthropists and philanthropy leaders may also find the paper's content informative for their own impact giving decisions. As the workplace context is schools, the paper refers to children and young people as 'students'.

What and how to use? *Purposeful Partnering* is a position paper, providing detailed content and examples to think through the case for purposeful partnering and the leadership it requires. People will be coming to this paper from different perspectives and with specific needs or areas of interest. With this in mind, readers can view each part as its own stand-alone document. People can read the paper or use it at the point that makes most sense to them and their need.

Organisation? After the Preface, the paper comprises five parts:

1. **Benefits:** Who benefits when schools and businesses engage purposefully?
2. **Importance:** Why do schools and businesses need to work together?
3. **Building a partnering culture:** Building cultures for high impact partnering
4. **Meaningful ways to engage with students:** Putting high impact partnering into place
5. **Four key messages ('ingredients') for making a difference:** From intent to action to impact

Some sections include specific illustrations of practice, as well as key reading lists.

The stories and quotations in the document come from individuals in schools, businesses and education-related organisations who have direct experience of the issues in some capacity.

How? Across mainly 2020-2021, this purposeful partnering project (referred to in this paper as 'the project or the analysis') involved a range of processes: interviews with 27 key Australian education and business leaders; insights from 15 educator-led forums and school-student-business interactions; a review of close to 200 reports and research documents; listening to key business and education leaders and researchers explain their thinking on podcasts;¹² and analysing recurrent themes and having our thinking tested in formal and informal ways.

Background? The people of Origin Energy chose education as the Foundation's focus in 2010. By 2020, QUT's Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies reported that 62,725 students had benefited. The Foundation facilitates Origin Energy volunteering through its long-term partnering with, for example, SolarBuddy. Origin Energy volunteers have worked with 20,000 young people across the education spectrum and from different locations around Australia. Some volunteers work directly with teachers to help bring the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) curriculum 'to life' and mentor students. The Foundation also works directly, in a school-led approach, with Rooty Hill High School in Western Sydney and the Foundation sees this collaboration as both "strategic" and a "privilege".

Origin Energy Foundation is committed to the purposeful partnering of schools and businesses. The Foundation initiated and enabled this position paper and work.

¹² Examples include: 'No Limitations: Blenheim Partners'; Singularity University, 'The Corporate Innovation Podcast'; 'The Art of Teaching Podcast: Mathew Green'; 'The Learning Future: Louka Parry'; 'The Knowledge Project'; 'Entrepreneurship & Ethics: Stanford Innovation Lab'; 'The Marketing Commute: Uni of Sydney'; 'How I work: Amantha Imber'; 'Work Life TED: Adam Grant'; 'Curious Minds: Gayle Allen'; 'Game Changers: Phillip Cummins and Adriano Di Prato'; and 'Fostering Creativity: Dublin City Uni'. 'Talking Teaching: The University of Melbourne'; 'Life's Lottery: Paul Ramsay Foundation'; 'InnovationAus Podcast'.

Part 1: Benefits

I learned that it does not matter how old you are at the beginning because if you actually learn with other people, you can become smarter than you were in solitary; because learning with other people can build your confidence and your collaboration skills and you can 'shoot like a rocket' in your learning.

Middle years student entrepreneurial education network panel member.¹³

Who benefits when schools and businesses work together? This section shows that multiple and mutual benefits are possible from businesses engaging with students and their schools (either directly or with or via others).

Partnering benefits students and adults

There is strong agreement around the need for partnering and the benefits it can reap for individuals (students *and* adults), sectors and the wider community. This agreement comes from different perspectives or lens, as shown in these examples:

Education lens: Partners in an Australia-wide, school-business-community multi-year, voluntary program found mutual value in these types of relationships. Key to a successful engagement was all partners benefiting from the collaboration. Importantly, from the 801 schools, 98% of reported partnerships benefited students (all students or small groups of students or individual students).¹⁴

Employee lens: Studies from the United Kingdom (UK) see the value of partnering in education, especially in terms of employee volunteering, in education. Volunteering enhances employee skills and competencies (learning), motivation and mission

(engagement), with transferrable productivity and career gains (potentially improving loyalty to an employer). The researchers noted:

"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."¹⁵

Expansive lens: For students and business volunteers, contextualising the curriculum contributes to a sense of meaning, mission and purpose. The emotion that stems from having a sense of meaning is what we attach to our appraisal of our experiences, achievements or thoughts (e.g. 'joy', 'pride', which is the antithesis of negative emotions that work against bringing out our best, such as anxiety and fear).¹⁶

David Gonski, AC used the concept of 'growing' to illustrate the benefits *and* importance of 'growing' for individuals, sectors and society:

"The concept of growth for a human is vital. It is as good as breathing.

Growth means learning new things. Appreciating new people. Understanding things better. And, that's where education is so wonderful because it provides you with more and more opportunities for growth.

Growing, in my opinion, means having the boundaries of your thinking pushed a little bit. People need that excitement and I think they also need that mission.

Lack of broadness and narrowness of thinking is probably one of the most dangerous things to yourself. It is dangerous to society ...

I think that a business that isn't growing, usually dies."

David Gonski, AC.

¹³ Anderson, M. & CESA Leading Learning Team. (2019). *CESA Entrepreneurial Education Inaugural 2019 Network - 'The Ideators'*.

¹⁴ Lonsdale, M. (2011). *School community partnerships in Australian schools*.

¹⁵ Percy, C. & Rogers, M. (2021). *The value of volunteering*, p. 5. The report provides a number of informative figures, such as Figure 7 (p. 17), which shows the indicative average reported skills gain by type of volunteering.

¹⁶ Martela, F. & Steger, M.F. (2016). 'The three meanings of meaning in life'.

Seven benefits

Schools and businesses working together intentionally, either directly and/or indirectly (e.g. via working with teachers and/or families), will reap benefits for students.¹⁷

Benefiting students can also have a flow-on effect, creating mutual and multiple benefits for others involved in partnering, as shown below. For example, an employee acting as a student mentor might develop their own confidence and communication skills while helping students to do the same.

Benefit	Students	Families	Schools	Business
Improving learning	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inspiring possibilities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Building confidence	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enabling greater participation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Becoming empathetic	✓	✓	✓	✓
Broadening connections	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deepening engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓

We present these seven benefits as one list because what matters most is shared interpretations. Even if the language and context around the benefits varies for specific groups, the essence of a benefit tends to stay consistent. This becomes evident in exploring some examples of the desired changes or success criteria against these benefits.

Success criteria for each benefit

Each reaped benefit acts like a Lego block. Each block, when understood and combined, creates a new and potentially more valuable change. For example:

A Harvard study found, when we see and experience progress it creates small wins and can

fuel motivation. The same study also found, when employees view their work as interesting, enjoyable and challenging, the employees were also more creative. Simply getting tasks done is not enough. People had to attach to the work, a sense that the work being done mattered – it was meaningful. In addition, the study reported “small but consistent steps forward, shared by many people, can accumulate into excellent execution”.¹⁸

What follows are examples of success criteria and evidence aligned to each of the seven benefits, acknowledging that some may combine or overlap.

Benefit	Changes - success criteria
Improving learning	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New knowledge, skills, capabilities and dispositions, and understanding when and how to use these in different contexts for different purposes ● New attitudes, attainment and achievements ● New understandings of self (e.g. strengths, passions, interests)
	<p>Evidence: Young people in England who had three or more career talks were motivated to study harder, translating their efforts into higher grades in Science, English and Maths.¹⁹ Careers education can improve academic achievement.²⁰</p> <p>Evidence: Students deciding on and leading the creation of their own social enterprise connected to a cause the students care about, real audiences with whom to trade, and real social entrepreneurs from whom to ask questions and advice (e.g. primary student choosing to take on the role of an accountant and improving their numeracy skills through learning about budgeting and how to budget for the team’s chosen enterprise; or Year 11 students demonstrating vocational curriculum ‘Work Related Skills’ of planning, problem-solving, and working in teams).²¹</p>

¹⁷ A consistent finding in Australian Council for Educational Research’s (ACER) school partnering projects.

¹⁸ Amabile & Kramer (2011). *The Progress Principle*. While targeted to business, its focus on how to boost motivation to drive innovation in work life for creativity and performance has relevance for education audiences too.

¹⁹ Kashefpakdel, E. T., Percy, C., & Rehill, J. (2019). *Motivated to achieve*.

²⁰ Kashefpakdel, E. T., Percy, C., & Rehill, J. (2017). *Career education that works*.

²¹ See: [Social Enterprise Academy Australia](#).

Every time we've had some of our staff participate, for example in **mentoring** programs, or when we've had some **knowledge exchange** kinds of partnerships, our staff come out of these experiences almost **re-energised** because they too can see their **knowledge in use in a different way**.

The staff come back **feeling challenged**. It makes them **think differently** about what they do on a day-to-day basis. They are seeing **how they can share their knowledge** with that group of students or young professionals.

Alexandra Gartmann,
former CEO, Rural Bank.

career goals.²² The iTrack program and The Smith Family's other career programs have a measurable impact on student retention.

Evidence: Researchers found young Britons who remembered four or more activities with employer volunteers in their school were twice as likely to easily pursue their career ambitions. The young people were also less likely to be unemployed or outside the education system post-school. The same research found a correlation between young people who had participated in a program of 10 or more career talks and higher income levels at the age of 26.²³

Benefit	Changes - success criteria
<p>Inspiring possibilities</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Considering new choices and/or directions ● Goal setting ● Lifting ambitions
<p>Evidence: The Smith Family iTrack program provides students in Years 9 to 12 with someone to talk to outside of their networks who can give them advice and encourage them with their post-school plans. Many disadvantaged students are the first in their family to go on to tertiary studies. Many young people disengage from their education and drop out of school during their teenage years. The impact of growing up in disadvantage creates barriers that can make it even more difficult to see the benefit of completing Year 12. Leaving school early also affects the work choices available to young people. Many disadvantaged students lack access to positive role models and mentors who can support their expectations, build aspirations for the future and learn how to reach their</p>	

Benefit	Changes - success criteria
<p>Building confidence</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pursuing ideas, interests, passions, including leadership aspirations ● Leading a team or taking on a new leadership role ● Being able to explain to others (e.g. ideas, interests, passions, decisions) ● Each student has hope about their future
<p>Evidence: Polls from Future First, an education charity building alumni communities in more than 1,200 state schools across the UK, found young people living in low socio-economic conditions were more worried than more advantaged students about the job they would get in the future.²⁴ These young people were less likely to know someone in a job they would like to do, when compared to more affluent peers. These concerns increase as the children get older. The charity reports, using former students (alumni) of the school as relatable role models and mentors is a simple, yet effective idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 74% of schools said the alumni improved students' knowledge of post-school pathways (including exploring options outside of their own town). 	

²² See: The Smith Family iTrack program

²³ Mann, A., Kashefpakdel, E. T., Rehill, J. & Huddleston, P. (2017). *Contemporary transitions*.

²⁴ Future First. (2019). *Young people, their futures and access to relatable role models*.

- 81% of students said being part of the alumni workshops showed them that ‘people like me’ can be successful, and 73% said that from the workshops they were now more confident about their future.
- 72% of the alumni volunteers said they would have liked to have met alumni when they were at school.

Benefit	Changes - success criteria
<p>Enabling greater participation</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pursuing and achieving goals (e.g. career ambitions) ● Greater autonomy (e.g. informed advising, decision making; active voice; agency) ● Equity of opportunity ● Designing / Co-designing learning

Evidence: David, is a past student in Big Picture Education Australia. He is now studying Biomedicine after a winding path and two failed attempts. Important positive influences on David were Big Picture Education Australia’s student-centred way of doing education and the teacher who saw David’s interest and encouraged him to pursue it. As David explains: *“At school, you always see the kids who are doing well ... You just see their good marks, but not actually what’s happening because we all have struggles but some people just ‘hold it in’ ... it’s really important not to just base things on your marks. They’re important, but your determination to achieve your dreams is probably more important”*.²⁵

Evidence: A new career breakfast pilot program developed to address problems related to “lack of ownership” in career education. Staff at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and the university’s parent ambassadors (parents of university students from equity backgrounds, such as those of low socio-economic status) co-designed the program. The program participants of 88 parents from three western Sydney high schools and 63 parents/carers provided feedback (of these 63 parents, 75% had not completed a university course). The feedback

that 77% of parents now had a broader awareness of career options and ALL parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were now confident to support their children’s educational and career journeys. (UTS is part of an 18-month multi-university equity study.)²⁶

Evidence: A group of Rural Youth Ambassadors (RYA) in 2021 told state and federal government education ministers they want to see more “youth friendly” information and interactions within sites (e.g. how to budget for city living and learning costs). The RYA is an initiative of the Country Education Partnership (CEP). It began around 10 years ago with 13 Victorian Year 11 student members. It provides young people with a formal platform to voice issues affecting country students directly to key decision-makers in education. Each year the RYAs, mostly from government secondary schools, but also Catholic and independent schools identify a set of issues and ideas relevant to the needs and experiences of young people in rural and remote communities.

The 2019 *National Review of Education in Regional, Rural and Remote Education* named the RYA program as best practice. In 2020, Federal Government funding enabled CEP to scale the approach to more young people across Australia. It is now a network of more than 400 Year 11 and alumni young people from rural and remote communities across New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. Plans are underway for young people to also join in 2022 from Tasmania and Western Australia.²⁷

Benefit	Changes - success criteria
<p>Becoming empathetic</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New and deepening understandings ... and flow on effects (e.g. fueling connection, addressing stereotypes and other barriers to social cohesion, excellence and equity)

Note: Empathising has four features: Perspective taking, staying out of judgement, recognising emotion in other people, and then communicating that emotion.²⁸

²⁵ See David’s story on the [Origin Energy YouTube channel](#). For more stories from young people see: [Origin Energy Foundation](#).

²⁶ Austin, K., O’Shea, S., Groves, O., Lamanna, J. & Singh, S. (2021). *Careers breakfasts*.

²⁷ See: [Country Education Partnership](#) (CEP).

²⁸ See [Brené Brown on RSA](#) in 2021, applying nursing scholar Theresa Wiseman’s cross-sector research on the four attributes of empathy.

Evidence: Australian Catholic University (ACU) and the university’s student ambassadors (current students) partner with primary schools in low socio-economic areas in their widening participation program called, ‘Explore Your Future’. In 2021, working with a local school-teacher, ACU designed a new university student mentoring / student career development learning program with ‘hands-on’ learning experiences to suit the school’s community context and its 24 Year 6 students. According to an evaluation, the program successfully challenged gender stereotypes. Important to achieving this success criteria were the university student ambassadors, their recruitment and the choice of learning strategies to intentionally challenge career and gender stereotypes.²⁹

Evidence: The UK organisation, Education and Employers, has found that authentic employer engagement can help tackle stereotypes, encourage young people to imagine different futures and make stronger connections between their aspirations and the real world of work.³⁰

in the community. Educators also valued what business brings to their own learning (content, skills and greater awareness of the ‘world of work’).³²

Evidence: Forty-three different local businesses in the United States (US) provide community-based work experiences to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (typically aged 18 to 22). The students have a job transition coach (teachers with specific expertise and knowledge of the students). Students get to identify their strengths and interests and build personal relationships. Within the local organisations, business culture improved (e.g. by expanding workforce diversity). Four employers hired students directly from the program (due to being able to see students on the job and the students being well-trained, reducing training time associated with hiring.)³³

Benefit	Changes - success criteria
Broadening connections	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accessing new expertise ● Building new relationships and networks ... and flow on effects (e.g. for present and/or future employability and employment) ● Positive regard – respecting and understanding ‘the other’?

Evidence: CSIRO facilitates the ongoing engagement of teachers and skilled volunteer STEM professionals.³¹

Evidence: A survey of 256 primary and secondary Australian schools in three states (New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria) found when businesses willingly engage with schools to provide benefit to students, this builds a positive perception of business

We might look at opening up our centre for a whole-day workshop with, say 20 students. We could have a few delegates (from the business) to teach and learn with the students. Actually, this could even be an opportunity for us to proof our own ideas and get their [students’] unique perspectives.

Having different minds and eyes on our ideas, combined with people from our business who are willing to learn and provide their insights; that is, in itself, invaluable. It would be a great way for building up confidence, collaboration, communication and community.

Whether these young people end up coming into our business is irrelevant. The intention is to inspire, to learn and to embrace like-minded people with design and tech interests. I think we need to start collaborating more like this.

We don’t lose. We get to learn too.

Ben Cooper, Design Lead, Digital Innovation Team at DXC Technology.³⁴

²⁹ Austin, K., O’Shea, S., Groves, O. Lamanna, J., Cull, N., & Collins, R. (2021). *Explore your future.*

³⁰ See more of the UK [Education and Employers](#) group’s research findings.

³¹ See: [CSIRO STEM Professionals in Schools](#)

³² Rothman, S. (2019). *What do schools want from their engagement with business?*

³³ Valentini, B., Carter, E. W., Bumble, J., & Hill, E. (2019). Employer views on school-business partnerships involving students with severe disabilities. A US study.

³⁴ In the 2021 Top 100 Graduate Employers, it states, “DXC Technology, an IT services company, also rocketed up the ladder, slotting into the number eight slot after being 48 last year.”

Benefit	Changes - success criteria
<p>Deepening engagement</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive associations (e.g. likes learning, being at school / work, usefulness to future) ... and flow on effects (e.g. improved attendance, a reflection of a student's intention, improved wellbeing reported to include improved relationships with peers and family, and reduced staff turnover, increased staff promotion) ● Putting in effort (e.g. voluntarily choosing to work on a project, persisting through to a project's completion or intended change)
<p>Evidence: A survey of 1,026 volunteers in the UK found the more hours a volunteer gives, the greater the gains (e.g. mentoring assists with relationship building skills and becoming a school or college governor and decision-making). But, for more than half of those who were volunteering only two days a year or less, these volunteers still report benefit in at least one of five areas: work satisfaction, productivity, promotions, earnings or job applications.³⁵</p> <p>Evidence: A mathematics teacher in Queensland met with an airline pilot to co-plan and co-teach secondary school students the concept of 'vectors' and how this concept gets applied in real life.³⁶</p> <p>Evidence: Two large Australian corporates with staff who participate as mentors in the Australian Business Community Network (ABCN) programs looked at their attrition and promotion rates over multiple years (Business 1: 500 mentors over a 5-year period. Business 2: 800 mentors over a 3-year period). Both companies found favourable results. Business 1, for example, found they had a 30% lower attrition rate and twice the promotion rate amongst ABCN mentors compared to the rest of its workforce.</p>	

The seven benefits, success criteria and evidence provided in Part 1 show partnering is and can be making a positive difference to students *and* adults *and* communities. Part 2 draws attention to the challenges and disruptors shaping the context for Australian students and why schools and businesses *need* to work together.

³⁵ Percy, C. & Rogers, M. (2021). *The value of volunteering*.

³⁶ Tweet by Brisbane secondary school maths teacher, Head of Mathematics and creator on YouTube of Maths Videos Australia, MVA (over 1,000 teaching videos for students in grade 7-12); Joel Speranza January 2021.

Documents referred to in Part 1

- Amabile, T.M. & Kramer, S.J. (2011). *The progress principle*. [For a business audience, but its focus on how to boost motivation to drive innovation in work life for creativity and performance, has relevance for education audiences too].
- Anderson, M. & CESA Leading Learning Team. (2019). *CESA Entrepreneurial Education Inaugural 2019 Network – ‘The Ideators’*. An internal report for the Catholic Education Diocese South Australia.
- Austin, K., O’Shea, S., Groves, O., Lamanna, J. & Singh, S. (2021). *Careers breakfasts: A career-information program for parents of high-school students*. [Part of an 18-month study of best-practice initiatives in career education for primary and secondary students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, including Retrieved from: University of Wollongong and National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Australia. <https://www.uow.edu.au/engage/outreach-pathways/research-projects/>]
- Austin, K., O’Shea, S., Groves, O. Lamanna, J., Cull, N., & Collins, R. (2021). *Explore your future: A career exploration and mentoring program for primary-school students*. [Part of the 18-month study listed above.]
- Corporate Citizenship and Volunteering Australia*. (2019). LBG Corporate Citizenship and Volunteering Australia.
- Education Council. (2019). *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. Canberra: Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- Education Council. (2020). *Looking to the future. Report of the review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training*. Canberra: Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- Edmonson, A. (2018). *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. Wiley, United States.
- Flynn, M. C., Pillay, H., & Watters, J. (2016). Industry-school partnerships: Boundary crossing to enable school to work transitions. *Journal of Education and Work*, 29(3), 309-331.
- Future First. (2019). *Young people, their futures and access to relatable role models*. Future First.
- Halsey, J. (2018). *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education: Final report*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Kashefpakdel, E. T., & Percy, C. (2017). Career education that works: An economic analysis using the British Cohort Study. *Journal of Education and Work*, 30(3), 217-234.
- Kashefpakdel, E. T., Percy, C., & Rehill, J. (2019). *Motivated to achieve: How encounters with the world of work can change attitudes and improve academic attainment*. London: Education and Employers Research.
- Lonsdale, M. (2011). *School community partnerships in Australian schools*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Mann, A., Kashefpakdel, E. T., Rehill, J. & Huddleston, P. (2017). *Contemporary transitions: Young Britons reflect on life after secondary school and college*. London: Education and Employers Research.
- Martela, F. & Steger, M.F. (2016). The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(5), 531-545.
- Percy, C. & Rogers, M. (2021). *The value of volunteering: Volunteering in education and productivity at work*. Education and Employers. [See also some key research findings via: <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research-main/>.]
- Rothman, S. (2019). *What do schools want from engagement with business? A commissioned report by the Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN)*. Camberwell, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research. Retrieved from https://research.acer.edu.au/policy_analysis_misc/30 Study includes ABCN schools and representative sample schools.
- Valentini, B., Carter, E. W., Bumble, J., & Hill, E. (2019). Employer views on school-business partnerships involving students with severe disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 50(3) 365–377.

Building the case for partnering

Illustrations from practice

Shared responsibility. Mutual and multiple benefits.

Example: Open-minded and strategic

The Smith Family former CEO, Dr Lisa O'Brien gives the example of corporates engaging staff through a combination of volunteering as well as structured and focused workplace giving.

What's the core business of corporates in the communities in which they are operating? This is a social licence for operating together. An example is Orica working with The Smith Family in Gladstone. This relationship began with a feasibility study and led to the implementation of the 'Learning for Life' program within the community.

Being open to seeing a multiplicity of opportunities and benefits is important and strategic. It offers partners the opportunity to invest in something. If done collectively, this has the potential for real impact.

Reflecting on the success of the approach, Dr O'Brien remarked:

"This is not just simply because the business has to be seen to be 'doing good' in the community. The business chooses to do so because their people love it. It's good for staff engagement. It's a way staff can get involved in their own time and as a business. It helps to broaden the organisation's mission and in a whole lot of ways the opportunity to acquit against that mission."

Dr Lisa O'Brien

Example: Each student in context

A rural government school's former principal would openly and continuously ask three simple questions:

- What skills do our young people bring and need to succeed?
- What does this community need from its young people, now and in the future?
- What do young people need from this community to succeed in life?

These questions are timeless. They are student cohort and context sensitive. Together, the questions recognise that students becoming active participants and learners is a shared responsibility.

The questions provide an immediate and robust place to start exploring why engage and why together.

It takes a village. Working in each student's present for all our futures.