

Part 4 excerpt on how
to engage meaningfully
with students

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 4 of the full *Purposeful Partnering* paper.

Part 4 provides guidance on:

- What are five effective ways businesses can engage with students?
- When and how might you choose to use the five ways of engaging?
- How can adults be promoting student voice, autonomy and agency when engaging with students?
- What does meaningful engagement with students look like in practice across education stages?
- What types of issues and questions are students raising about their present and future?

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.

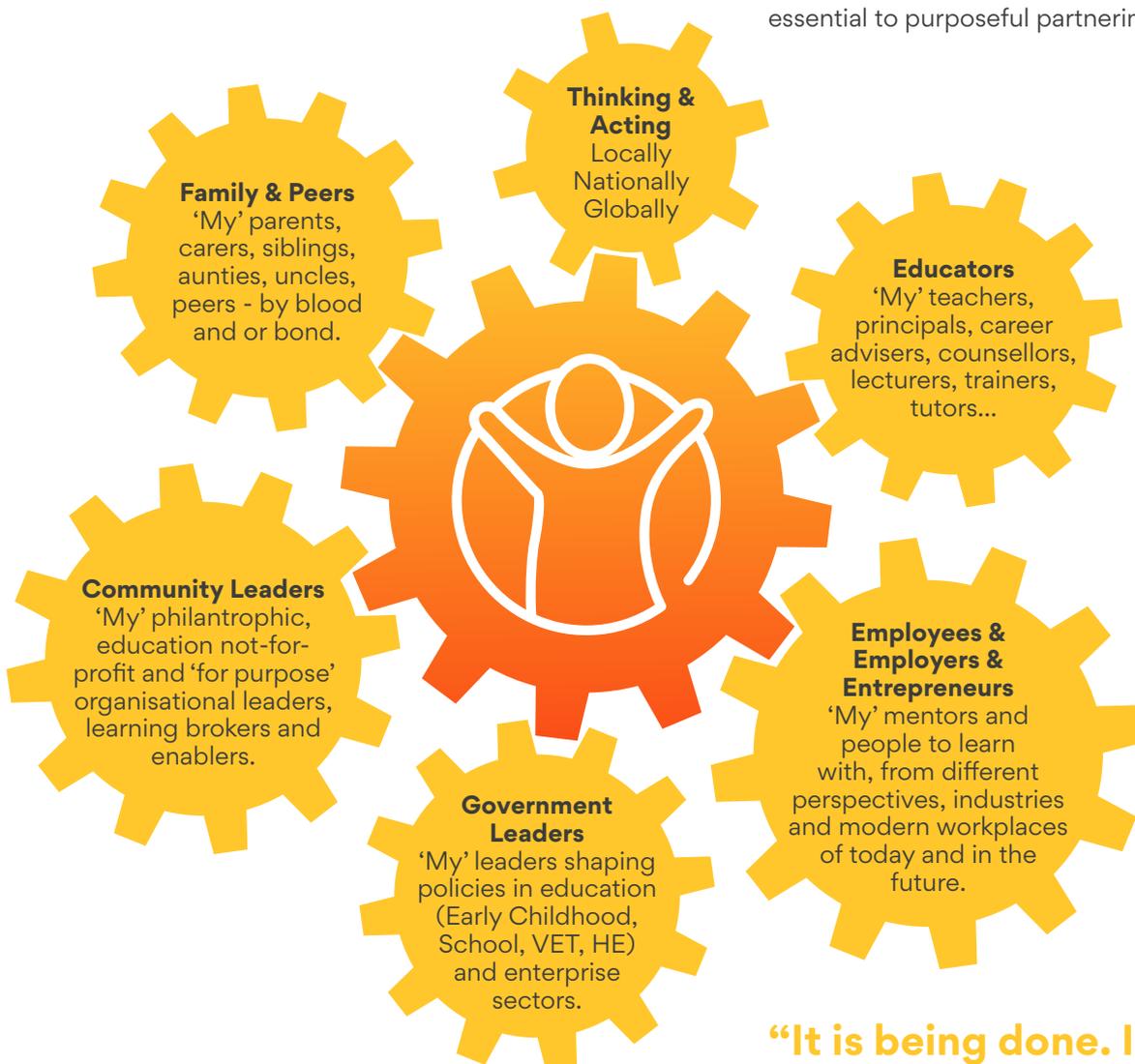
#Lifelong and #Lifewide Learning with a suite of people directly and indirectly over time.

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 4: Meaningful ways to engage with students

“Being able to express what I love doing ... I found that really good, and now I’ve got a better idea of what I actually want to do for my future ... I definitely want to open my own business with growing produce.”

Secondary student reporting on her entrepreneurial learning experience.¹⁷⁹

Presented in this section are five effective ways businesses engage with students and their schools. It shows how high impact partnering is being done and can be done at every stage of education.

Ways businesses engage with students

Students expect and need greater ownership in their learning. When students engage with business, the experience for students and adults should be of value and create value.

Ways businesses engage with students:¹⁸⁰

1. Mentoring ∞	● Types of interaction and their specific intent may overlap or combine in different ways.
2. Hosting 📍	● Every interaction has a curriculum.
3. Challenges 💡	● Any interaction must provide benefit to students (even when the audience for an interaction is, for example, a business volunteer or principal or teacher or family member).
4. Talks /Q&As 🗣️	● Without clarity of purpose and the use of educational <i>and</i> business expertise, partners cannot assume designing and implementing an interaction is either best practice (improve) or next practice (innovative).
5. Expos 🚀	● Interactions can occur and start early across education stages in different spaces and places.

It is a mistake to assume schools want businesses to engage with all students or all students at once.¹⁸¹ Participation of students will vary at any given point in time and over time.

¹⁷⁹Anderson, M., Hinz, B. & Matus, H. (2017). *The Paradigm Shifters*, p. 34. Initiator and mentor, Professor Yong Zhao.

¹⁸⁰The UK charity, Education and Employers, research is one of the most comprehensive and detailed we came across with respect to type of interaction and impact (we adapted and organised the UK categories to align with Australian practices and research from ‘the analysis’). The UK research also includes governing as a ‘type of activity’.

¹⁸¹Lonsdale, M. (2011). School community partnerships in Australian schools and Rothman, S. (2019). What do schools want from engagement with business?

Learning and development stage

Early years
(Age 0-8)

Middle Primary and
Secondary Years
(Age 9-14)

Senior Secondary
(Age 15-19)

Early adulthood
(Age 20--24)

Student scope

- Universal – every student in a class, year level, school / tertiary or community
- Targeted – a small group or groups of students around the students’ interest or point of need
- Intensive – one-to-one relationships around a very specific intent

There is a growing evidence base of schools and businesses engaging at every stage of education.¹⁸²

Mentoring¹⁸³ ∞

“One of the favourite questions I get asked whenever I give a speech is, ‘Did you have a mentor?’ And, my answer is, ‘No. I had more than one mentor.’”

David Gonski, AC.

Purposes: Mentoring reflects a variety of learning and life purposes. These range from personal development and social and emotional purposes through to inspiring possibilities and career development learning purposes. The learning purposes for students can be very task specific, for example, how to prepare a CV or business plan or present yourself in an interview. The purposes can also be broad, such as reassuring students about transitions from school to further learning and working and/or students learning how to develop and use networks for achieving their own goals.

Practices: Mentoring is a sustained relationship, often with students around key transition points in and beyond school. Practices include mentors sharing stories of why and how they chose subjects, chose employment, chose where to study post-school, and/or made transitions or switches while in school, in university, in further education and training or employment, and/or in a mentor’s past or current work.

In practice: Australian Business Community Network (ABCN)

Q: How do you know if, as a mentor, you are providing value for a student or small group of students? Allegra Spender, former CEO ABCN responds: “The question of timing and timeliness of mentoring talks to why we structure our program offerings around specific purposes and processes. Bringing young people together with business volunteers is more than simply saying, ‘Okay, so you’re my mentor and off we go.’ What ABCN provides is a structure and focus for the mentoring, for example, ‘Today, we’ll be focusing on goal setting.’ This is a very relevant topic to both students *and* the business mentor.

Goal setting is an important competency for employability *and* in life. Through guided processes, we invite the business mentor and students to share how they use goal setting in their contexts. We invite, for example, mentors to talk with students about a goal they set and did achieve. We also invite the mentor to talk about a goal they set but did not achieve and what they took away from the experience to inform what they did next. We invite mentors to use their personal experiences to personalise the learning around these different skills and mindsets.

It is a school’s choice to partner with us. What the school’s leadership puts around our offering is really, really important. The school understands which students to target and why. The school’s leaders give visibility to the school-business relationship and its value to students.”

People: Students need opportunities to connect with different mentors and mentoring experiences for different education and life purposes.

“Everyone needs to find their own personal ‘board of directors’... A diverse group of people who can give you advice across a spectrum of topics. ... That ‘board of directors’ is going to change over time.”

Susan Coghill, Chief Marketing Officer, CMO, Tourism Australia.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² The OECD’s research concludes engaging together should start early; it can start early at each stage of education.

¹⁸³ We give more focus to mentoring here because our analysis identified it as having high impact. **Not sure where or how to start? Look at ‘Together 4 Youth’.** A cooperative network of organisations with expertise in volunteer mentoring with young people (secondary through to early adult).

¹⁸⁴ See: ‘[The Marketing Commute](#)’ Podcast, 12 December 2020, Season 3, 22 minutes.

Teachers and/or students engage with volunteer mentors from tertiary (e.g. university students) and/or business. Mentors can advise in specific curriculum areas to develop and deepen knowledge or specific skills; and/or co-design curriculum. Mentors can also promote positive associations with cultural identity and ways of knowing through, for example, the power of storytelling.

In practice: Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME)¹⁸⁵

AIME is a nationwide mentoring program that began in 2005. By 2015, researchers reported the program as operating in 23 universities across Australia, with 1,066 university student mentors and offering the AIME curriculum to secondary schools. There are 2,789 Year 9 to 12 student mentee participants. Schools are within a two-hour drive of a university campus. AIME also offers a Tutor Squad approach. In this approach, AIME deploys groups of university student mentors directly into schools for additional one-to-one tutoring of AIME student mentees.

Over the past nine years AIME has commissioned large-scale evaluation and research. Both the consulting firm, KPMG, and university academics have established a positive economic impact of the program for mentees and the Australian economy.

A research partnership between AIME and researchers from two Australian universities examined the program's educational and life impact on mentees. From across 15 universities, 89% of the students (mentees) aspired to complete Year 12, 44% aspired to go to university and 79% had clear post-school aspirations. AIME's approach, noted the researchers, privileges the knowledges students bring to the mentoring experience and actively rejects deficit framing of students. AIME, "perpetually links the past, present and future in aspirational terms, and in doing so, recognises the navigational capacity the young people already possess."

Sharing her story to inspire other students and families, Sherice was the first in her family to

complete her school education. Sherice paid credit to AIME:

"My AIME mentor in Year 9 said I could go to any university I wanted to because she really believed in me and how smart I was. By the time I hit Year 11, I was going to go to university no matter how I got there." Sherice is studying primary school teaching after taking an alternative path to university and, in her own words, she's been, "smashing uni ever since."

Sherice.¹⁸⁶

Mode: Typically, there will be one or more volunteer mentors with a small group of school students in the presence of another adult (usually teacher and/or intermediary coordinator, such as in ABCN's career learning or the Raise organisation's social and emotional mentoring¹⁸⁷).

Require: How to connect a mentor with students is very important.

- All adult mentors when working with school-age students require an up-to-date working with children check. Teachers as mentors meet this requirement as a condition of employment.
- Whether mentoring is a core program offering or embedded within another program (e.g. enterprise and entrepreneurship education), best practice tells us mentors will participate in explicit training and/or on-boarding processes.
- You can expect big businesses to have a volunteering policy to make it easier for people to have a number of days per year to volunteer. You can expect education to have a policy. The New South Wales Department of Education website, for example, has a clear 'Mentoring Students Policy' (e.g. student mentoring is to achieve planned outcomes; it is the responsibility of principals to ensure student mentoring programs conducted in schools and as part of a school activity are planned and implemented in accordance with the Department's mentoring students' policy).

¹⁸⁵ Harwood, V., McMahon, S., O'Shea, S., Bodkin-Andrews, G. & Priestly, A. (2015). *Recognising aspiration*.

¹⁸⁶ Origin Energy Foundation, 2020, video story series. See: [Sherice urges people to "shoot for the moon..."](#)

¹⁸⁷ Raise. See: [Mentor with us](#).

Research: Mentoring tends to reflect a type of volunteering in schools and colleges that involves high-commitment and leads to greater gains than low commitment practices (e.g. a one-off Q&A). UK researchers found mentor volunteers in schools or colleges reported a positive high impact on their relationship building skills. It also had positive medium impacts on a range of other skills - improving communication, problem solving, planning, prioritising, people management and leadership).¹⁸⁸

Insight: Most important is a shared understanding of purpose and language. In a school context, the language of mentor or adviser may sometimes interchange. At early adulthood points of transition, the term sponsoring may be a more appropriate term to use. Sponsors take proactive steps beyond mentor advice and feedback. For example, sponsors may use their own platforms and reputation to advocate and provide a young person with visible and meaningful exposure to the sponsor's own network connections.¹⁸⁹

Insight: How well is each student's uniqueness and unique situation understood? Context and timing matters. **Even with the best of intentions, multiple mentors and mentoring experiences may not be in the best interests of all students or what each student wants or needs ... at that moment.**

*"In a world where we have coaches for fitness, mentors for professionals, nutritionists for our diet and lifestyle; we can surround ourselves, if you have the means and capacity, to access a lot of support. **Mentoring, though, is very, very, very contextual.** If you're a young person sitting in a traumatised situation or in a community that does not have that sort of mindset for asking for 'help' beyond your teacher, then start with one mentor or a coach and build up over time a range of opportunities and people. Five different people straight off can be too overwhelming."*

**Jan Owen, AM Co-Founder,
Learning Creates Australia.¹⁹⁰**

Insight: Mentor might not be the right or only term to use. Instead, a school's primary intent may be to **build a community** around each student. Importantly, students want to connect with relatable people, perhaps people who went to their school and/or people "like me" or from "around here".¹⁹¹

In practice: Ourschool

"I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do when I was in Year 9 and 10." An alumnus offered these words of reassurance to a class of secondary students in the Ourschool network. Established in 2019, Ourschool builds sustainable alumni communities in government secondary schools across Victoria.

In 2021, the network comprised 24 rural and metropolitan secondary schools. More than 29,600 students have participated in Ourschool's alumni career pathways sessions, with 7,620 alumni connected to their schools and the program. The Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals (VASSP) auspiced a two-and-a-half-year pilot of the program and maintain a close relationship with the Ourschool not-for-profit organisation. Philanthropy is also a key partner. The service finds former government school students and enables the school's leadership executive to set up and co-construct forums of interaction between alumni, students and staff. An independent evaluation of Ourschool indicates that students find connecting with former students meaningful and relatable. Students get to hear how former students are navigating post-school life (often these are stories of 'non-linear' pathways and self-discovery). Ourschool's approach has a team member working with and at the school each week. The approach enables and builds the capacity of the school team to lead and do its alumni program on their own in the future. The model also encourages and facilitates networks of schools to create connections. The time commitment for a volunteer is about three hours annually, but Ourschool's data shows these 'touchpoints' give the alumnus an 'in' to the network and other opportunities and benefits flow as a result. For example, the alumnus offers students work experience or an annual scholarship for current students to "chase their dreams".¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Percy, C. and Rogers, M. (2021). *The value of volunteering*.

¹⁸⁹ Emphasis: Mentors advise you. Sponsors advocate for you. Harvard Business Review Press, Hewlett, 2013.

¹⁹⁰ Jan Owen is also the immediate past CEO of the Foundation for Young Australians.

¹⁹¹ Future First. (2019). *Young people, their futures and access to relatable role models*.

¹⁹² Ourschool reconnected Western Sydney University Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Barney Glover AO and his siblings to their old high school, Newcomb Secondary College. See: The experience led to an [act of generosity](#) - an annual scholarship.

Hosting students

Purposes: Hosting reflects a range of immersions/experiences to provide students with the opportunities to improve their learning, build employability skills, develop and clarify future learning and working aspirations, and gain awareness of post-school possibilities for employability. Hosting can enable students to develop new and different networks, through to actual employment.

Practices: Immersions come in different forms. Practices include, ‘maker taster’ sessions, workshops, and work-based work experience. They can also include: ‘In-residence’ school-based programs with, for example, artists, architects, or scientists. When contributing to a qualification, the umbrella term, ‘work integrated learning’ refers to contextualised student learning experiences through such processes as apprenticeships, internships (which can include senior secondary students), work placements or industry-based learning and practicums.

As one CEO pointed out:

“A lot of businesses do internships. They do these over the summer break with the universities. With an internship, the business can carve out a specific piece of work for the student to come in and work on. The business can pay the student, while at the same time, giving the student a real-world experience.”

People: Hosting is led or enabled by a school or network of schools, and/or employer, and/or entrepreneur; and/or a third-party (e.g. university). Secondary students, for example, can participate as volunteers or in part-time work through career education and work exploration and/or work-related curriculum (vocational learning), or training and accredited courses or school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (vocational learning and Vocational Education and Training [VET]).¹⁹³ Primary students, for example, can participate in and benefit from the direct engagement with various ‘X’ In-residents.

Mode: Immersions reflect different workspaces – onsite, hybrid/blended, and/or remote.

Research: For more than a decade, multiple studies in Australia have found “that senior secondary students who undertake school-based assessment tasks or VET combined with work-based learning in senior secondary programs are more likely to complete school and find secure full-time employment”.¹⁹⁴ Secondary student Year 9 survey results indicate most students were, as a result, “better informed”.

Require: Hosting will have different requirements depending on the hosting purpose and education stage of a young person, such as occupational health and safety.

Challenges

Purposes: Challenges are a flexible learning strategy for diverse purposes. For example, improving learning of a key attribute and/or knowledge or skill, through to students becoming more capable and confident in demonstrating and deploying their learning from one context to another. A challenge can serve a stand-alone purpose or embed within the purposes and approaches of mentoring and/or hosting.

Practices: These are hands-on and often collaborative student team-based. Challenges can range from one-off student prizes, awards and local or global competitions, through to sustained and deep learning models of student-led and student interest-led project-based learning, problem-based learning, and enterprise and entrepreneurship approaches. Best practice challenge strategies promote greater student voice and agency. For example, providing students with a ‘choice menu’ of options or ways to approach the challenge or for student teams to co-create the parameters and ‘success criteria’ of the challenge. Best practice challenges will have some sort of visible student performance and/or authentic assessment and/or recognition for all or parts of the challenge’s components and capabilities. Best practice ensures students (and the partners) understand the intent for doing the challenge.

¹⁹³ Education Council. (2014). Preparing Secondary Students for Work. Appendix A, p. 20. Creating Clarity – Vocational Learning and VET chart.

¹⁹⁴ Department of Education and Training, Victoria. (2020). Review into vocational and applied learning pathways in senior secondary school; and Misko, J., Chew, E. & Korbel, P. (2020). VET for secondary school students, p. 169.

In practice: World of Work (WOW) 100-hour Challenge

Government school students in South Australia, from Year 7 onwards, can access a new South Australian government-initiated careers education platform, launched in September 2021. Students can use the platform to begin clarifying their passions and interests and link these interests to meaningful career options post school. Included through the platform is the 100-hour World of Work (WOW) Challenge. Students can take up the challenge to discover different careers and participate in their own self-led career exploration experiences posted by employers and industry on the (login) website portal.

People: Different groups or sectors can initiate, lead or enable a challenge, such as philanthropy, education, business and students themselves.

Mode: People conduct challenges in different workspaces – onsite, hybrid/blended, and/or remote.

Research: Challenge interactions often embed within enterprise and entrepreneurship. UK research indicates that enterprise type interactions have a high positive impact on volunteers' prioritising, influence, leadership and teamwork; and a medium positive impact on building relationships, communications, decision-making, problem-solving, planning, organising, and people management. The same UK 2021 research on the value of volunteering found, "By practicing the skill in an environment which the volunteer values, by seeing the impact on young people or in the education system, volunteers feel the time is well spent and the skill more fully internalised."¹⁹⁵

Talks /Q&As

Purposes: These have lots of intended purposes, depending on the identified audience and need. Purposes include improving learning, such as new knowledge and new understandings; inspiring possibilities, such as considering new choices and/or directions; building confidence and enabling greater participation, such as pursuing an interest or passion;

becoming empathetic, such as tackling stereotypes; and broadening connections, such as exposing students *and* families to new people and possibilities, through diverse stories and tips. Talks and Q&As can serve a stand-alone purpose or embed within the purposes and approaches of mentoring and/or hosting.

"What I needed as a student was people talking with me about their career stories and experiences. What I wanted was exposure to the diversity of opportunities 'out there' and for people to expose me to things that maybe I had not even thought about before. Exposure to a rolling suite of professionals, with all sorts of different jobs, would have been really, really useful."

Sally-Ann Williams, CEO Cicada Innovations.

Practices: Best practice is to create a conversational atmosphere and format with students *and/or* families. For example, students might ask their own questions 'on the spot', or students (with their teachers) creating and prioritising the student questions before the session, or the school's or tertiary parent ambassadors doing something similar with families.

People: The most important selection criterion is for the person to be 'relatable' to the students in front of them. The person might have been an alumnus of the school or have deep family roots in the community. At other times, the driver will be an alignment between what people are creating and changing and what the students care about, are curious about, or are themselves exploring. While at other times, there will be a deliberate intention to widen and diversify with whom students engage.

Mode: People conduct talks / Q&As in different workspaces – onsite, hybrid/blended, and/or remote.

Research: Talks /Q&As (and fairs¹⁹⁶) are important and viewed in the research as offering a "well-rounded", short and flexible interaction for students and volunteers. Talks link to a lot of skills for volunteers (for example, organising, decision-making, communications, prioritising and leadership). The UK volunteering research indicates the highest impact is

¹⁹⁵ Percy, C. & Rogers, M. (2021). *The value of volunteering*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁶ UK researchers use the term 'fairs' in their research. We noted the term 'expos' also in use in Australia.

on planning skills (due in part to the nature of what's involved around planning the content and processes for a talk).¹⁹⁷

Insight: UK research indicates sequencing is a factor on the degree of a talk's impact. "The impact of the extra career talks was larger for young people who had previously attended more short-duration career activities (such as career talks or careers fairs)".

Expos ↗

Purposes: Expos (or fairs) can serve a stand-alone purpose or embed within the purposes and approaches of hosting or talk / launch events. An expo serves to expose, inspire, educate and connect people around a mutual topic of interest.

Practices: Expos tend to be larger-scale cooperative forums than fairs.

People: Instigators or hosts of an expo can come from community, business, education, or be young people.

Mode: People can join an expo remotely or in person or both. For example, in 2021, Year13 ran a free online careers expo open to all schools. The timing of the Expo aligned with National Careers Week in May.¹⁹⁸

Research: The UK research viewed expos positively (as noted above in the Talks /Q&A section).

Promoting student voice, autonomy and agency

How can adults be promoting student voice, autonomy and agency when engaging with students?

"It's time to recognize that the potential for greatness lies in a unique form within each child – and that the goal of education should be to encourage and develop it."

Professor, Yong Zhao, University of Kansas and Melbourne Graduate School of Education, at the University of Melbourne.¹⁹⁹

In an interview by Year13's founder Saxon Phipps with **Atlassian's co-founder and CEO, Scott Farquhar**, Scott offered four pieces of advice or 'tips' to young people on how to be "engineering a fulfilling future": **know yourself, improve yourself, match your passion and make the world a better place.**²⁰⁰

Scott's advice is deceptively simple. How students put the advice in to practice, has been less simple.

Historically, it is the concerns of adults that direct the conversation. More than four decades of research (here and overseas) indicate that initiatives and interactions can subvert (consciously and unconsciously) adults genuinely seeing, hearing and listening to students/ young people.²⁰¹

"All children have a right to speak out and be heard on all matters affecting their education."²⁰² Students expect 'a seat at the table' ('table' meaning 'in school', 'on country', 'in community', and 'in the world').²⁰³

Participation is a human right. It provides a useful lens to frame and understand how adults do and can promote every student's greater active participation. The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Children has a bundle of four rights most relevant to student voice and the exercising of their voices in all aspects of their education and life. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child reports, Article 12 as the most important to take on board as a general principle:²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Percy, C. & Rogers, M. (2021). *The value of volunteering*, p. 18.

¹⁹⁸ See: [Year 13 2021 Digital Careers Expo](#).

¹⁹⁹ Zhao, Y. (2018). *Reach for Greatness*.

²⁰⁰ See: Business: [Atlassian's Scott Farquhar's top career tips for Gen Zs](#). 10 October 2021.

²⁰¹ See for example, Shier, H. (2019). 'Student voice and children's rights: Power, empowerment, and "Protagonismo"' in Peters, M. A. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of teacher education; Commission for Children and Young People. (2021). Empowerment and participation*; and Vukovic, R. (2020). 'How student voice has evolved over time', *Teacher*.

²⁰² Shier, H. (2019). 'Student voice and children's rights: Power, empowerment, and "Protagonismo"', p. 1

²⁰³ It is important to note, 'participation rights' do not automatically equate to doing as students / young people say.

²⁰⁴ See also Part 2 on the context for Australian students.

“Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

Key concepts

Understanding a student’s developmental ‘journey’ to greater participation has practical design and measurement relevance for the five ways of engaging (e.g. mentoring, hosting, challenges). Partners can be intentional in the ways they engage and what indicators of success from engaging with students they might explicitly expect or want to see. It is important to note, however, that the student’s journey is not necessarily linear.

A student’s journey begins with **how students feel** about themselves. It is a judgement a student develops about their self-worth (researchers call this ‘self-concept’). The journey continues as a **student develops the personal belief** that they are capable of doing something or carrying out some course of action. It is a judgement a student develops about their ability to accomplish a task (researchers call this ‘self-efficacy’).

When a student has agency, they not only believe they can act, **they do and can learn to act**. At the core of student agency is the capacity to exercise control (researchers call this ‘personal agency’). A student acts with intention, planning and reflection. Researchers also refer to ‘collective agency’ or ‘connected agency’ or ‘creative agency’, which requires coordination, cooperation and collaboration with others.

Ways of engaging, such as mentoring, can influence a student’s beliefs and judgements and whether they take an increasing level of responsibility in their learning.

Key influences: A student’s experience of success (most important); seeing others like themselves succeed, such as their peers; the encouragement or persuasion of others, as well as reducing stress associated with completing a task, such as each student understanding key concepts or terms.

Key indicators: A student with high levels of self-efficacy is likely to choose to participate actively in their learning, such as giving something new a try or seeking more challenging learning experiences; or being interested in personal goal setting toward academic attainments and personal aspirations. A student is likely to want to put more effort in to their learning (not because they ‘have to’); persist longer when faced with difficulty and not be ‘put-off’ in the face of a set-back; as well as recover more quickly from a mistake or failing.

Models

No model is perfect, but different models can provide insights for planning and reviewing student participation. For example:²⁰⁵

Is student participation genuine or fake? (Hart’s ‘Ladder of Child Participation’ eight rungs: e.g. 1. Manipulation – do as adults say. 2. Decoration – take part in someone else’s event but not understand why. 3. Tokenism – asked for a view but little or no choice over expressing their view or scope.)

How committed are adults to student participation? (Shier’s ‘Pathways to Participation’ from children being listened to through to children sharing power and responsibility for decision-making; and every point in the path also explores an adult’s readiness and ability to commit and work in new ways with children and what this looks like when it becomes a habit embedded in an agreed policy.)

Is the environment enabling for student participation? (Lundy’s ‘Space, Voice, Audience and Influence’ - each of these elements must be in place to fully realise student participation, such as a student believing and being able to express a view because the space is safe and supported, and there is an audience listening to their views.)²⁰⁶

What level of engagement is student participation? (Lansdown’s ‘Three Modes of Participation’, a simple model students can use themselves with each other or adults with students. Consultation – adults ask students for their views, but that is all; Collaboration – working together, sharing roles and responsibilities in key aspects of an engagement’s planning and actioning; Child-led – children and young people self-organise to initiate, act and deliver ‘something’, which may or may not require adult support.)

²⁰⁵ Shier, H. (2019). ‘Student voice and children’s rights: Power, empowerment, and “Protagonismo”’.

²⁰⁶ The Commission for Children and Young People partnered with the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian and the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia to develop the *Empowerment and participation* guide. This is comprehensive, practical and draws heavily on the views and experiences of children and young people themselves. The guide makes reference and use of the 2007 Lundy model, see p. 28.

Adults can be enabling students to take increasing control. As an example, a group of students (41 rural students in Years 5 and 6 and Years 8 and 9) were part of a collaborative project between Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE) and Cisco's 'Global Problem Solvers'. Within this project, students devised their own 'success' criteria for implementing Social Enterprise Schools. For the purposes of this paper, the student success criteria align with what researchers in the US define as the four elements that create meaning to guide designing experiences for impact:²⁰⁷

Student: The students' success criteria for implementing Social Enterprise Schools.	Research: How to design experiences for positive 'peak' moments and impact.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Has 'real-life' application (e.g. for their social enterprise now or in their life now or later on) 	Insight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generate new understandings about our world and ourselves ● Make us 'stretch'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Active ● Fun (enjoyable and challenging and competitive) 	Elevation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rise above the everyday ● Provoke memorable joy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Doing with peers (in small groups) 	Connection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthen relationships to create shared meaning and deepen ties ● Strengthen relationships to reconnect people with the mutual purpose of their efforts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can notice if getting better at ... 'X' (e.g. being a good team member, or getting good at delivering a pitch, or getting better at gathering and using feedback etc.) 	Pride: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Capture us at our best to recognise achievement and courage ● Capture us at our best to build belief, commitment and to persist

Stories across education stages

There will be stories of schools partnering with and through others to provide benefits to students across Australia's 9,500-plus schools, in more than 500 local government areas or on country in 100s of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.²⁰⁸ The intent of sharing the following stories is to illustrate 'the what' 'the how' in direct response to the question: *How does promoting student voice, autonomy and agency look in practice across education stages?*

"Young people don't respond to talking about jobs or skills or occupations. They respond to dreams and aspirations and problems."

Dr Martin Parkinson, AC, Former Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Students want meaningful opportunities to interact in 'hands-on' direct ways with people from business, not-for-profits and the community.

Early and primary years

Story: The children decided

Princess Hill Primary school had a plan to hold a fundraising film night to buy toys for asylum seeker children. Year 1 students, however, decided that it would be better to design and make the toys themselves. Children making their own decisions is not a new concept for this primary school, neither is an inter-generational approach to learning. Year 5 and 6 students had already designed the school playground, working collaboratively with the school council and an architect. The school's philosophy is to partner with students, enabling them to help shape the world and participate in it with purpose. The school gives equal weight to collaboration, creativity and critical thinking as it does to literacy and numeracy. To this end, the school has joined around 80 schools in a project with the University of Melbourne called 'New Metrics for Success', looking at ways to measure and recognise in valid and appropriate ways, such as with badges and/or micro-credentials for student development in these important areas.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2017). *The power of moments*.

²⁰⁸ For example, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. See: ['Whose Country am I on?'](#)

²⁰⁹ Summarised from Adam Carey, "The children decided": Schools join quest for better gauge of student progress', *The Age*, 22 February 2021. The project lead, Professor Milligan, indicated there are now around 80 schools participating.

Story: The Students run ‘The Shop’²¹⁰

Mypolonga Primary School is a small rural school in South Australia. ‘The Shop’ was set up in 1994 in a disused post office across the road from the school, run by students and originally selling student-made goods. In 1994, a local tour operator who ran Proud Mary Nature Tours offered to put The Shop on their weekly tour itinerary. Fast forward to 2020 and The Shop’s annual turnover is \$18,000, with 20% retained to reinvest into the school community. The school fully integrates The Shop in its curriculum, with students completing a Certificate of Financial Management. Students get multiple opportunities to develop, practice, demonstrate and deploy their financial literacy, leadership (e.g. mentoring their younger peers), people capabilities (e.g. customer-focused) and behavioural capabilities (e.g. being self-aware). Teachers supervise, ensuring customers receive the correct change. Students as young as reception age are part of the program. The ‘kid friendly’, ‘real life’, successful approach to student learning has attracted attention internationally and across Australia (e.g. in 2012, it inspired the Australian Securities and Investment Commission’s (ASIC) nation-wide MoneySmart Primary Teaching Package and teacher workshops).

Story: Boosting ambitious equitable and creative thinking workspaces

Merrylands East Public School in western Sydney comprises a diverse population of students. One of the school’s partners is the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA). Since 2014, students from the school have been engaging annually in a four-day workplace immersion. The student experience connects the workspaces of school and the MCA together, along with meaningful family engagement. The students write a resume, apply for a job at the MCA and attend an interview. The students have also worked on redesigning the museum’s website to make it more ‘kid-friendly.’

How did it begin? Many students’ families could not afford excursions to Canberra’s National Gallery or other places of significance. The school team turned to local alternatives. To remove the barriers for

students and their families, the teachers and the principal paid for students to attend the MCA and Parliament House in Sydney. This story of addressing ‘inaccessibility’ would lead to the MCA developing a subsidy to improve access to creative learning for public school students in western and south-west Sydney. The MCA would go on to work closely with more schools.²¹¹

Merrylands is also an alumnus of the inaugural Social Ventures Australia (SVA) collaborative learning network, The Connection™ @Connection_SVA.²¹² Independent evaluations consistently highlight that SVA’s approach, alongside the expertise and direct understanding of students located in communities experiencing disadvantage, creates “safe spaces to share”, improving student educational outcomes.²¹³

Students want to ask the questions that matter to them now *and* as they think ahead.

Early secondary

Story: The Explorers

Rooty Hill High School’s Entrepreneurial Education, involving all 200 Year 8s, is known as ‘The Explorers’. The offering is a co-designed school-led entrepreneurial education program. Introduced in 2019, it involves a face-to-face series of teacher-student conversations, teacher team-Origin Energy volunteer conversations, and student, teacher, Origin Energy volunteer co-design workshops. This culminates in a full day of explorer hands-on workshops, co-facilitated by a teacher and an Origin Energy volunteer. (Note: In 2020, due to COVID-19, the partners adapted the offering to create a blended-learning model, running over four weeks of interactions with Origin Energy).

Students decide with their Entrepreneurial Education teacher team what **questions** they want to ask Origin’s employees during ‘The Explorers’. The school uses the Foundation for Young Australian’s seven job clusters²¹⁴ to frame and assist with the design of the offering. It is one of the pillars within a wider whole school change model around student subject selection, work experience and future learning and work decisions.

²¹⁰ Drawn from Principal, Rita O’Brien who spoke at the Social Ventures Australia’s The Connection, September 2021; and video see: [Case study: Mypolonga Primary School – MoneySmart Teaching](#).

²¹¹ Adapted from The ARTS hub, news by Brooke Boland, 9 May 2018. See: [‘How Artist-led creative learning breaks access barriers for children.’](#)

²¹² Principal, John Goh spoke at the Social Ventures Australia’s The Connection, September 2021; #LeadMeet, October 2021.

²¹³ SVA. See: RMIT evaluation of [The Connection](#).

²¹⁴ AlphaBeta. (2017). *The new work mindset*.

The other pillar is the school's Year 10 Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP). These pillars connect to the school's key approaches in Year 7 (e.g. discovering my strengths) and a strong focus on creativity and a capability-driven curriculum across the school.

Student questions:

- What is the most interesting problem you get to work on?
- What was the first day of work like at Origin?
- What are the main skills required to do your job?
- Which strategies do you use to manage your time well? How do you prioritise your tasks?
- How do you manage different personalities when they want to do things a different way?
- What is the best way to handle getting instructions from a boss?
- How do you explain or show others what you do?

Questions asked during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- How has your work changed because of COVID-19?
- How has your role changed because of COVID-19?
- Have requests in your work changed because of COVID-19?
- What is the biggest challenge in your role at the moment?
- How are you dealing with the current pandemic in your jobs?

Students want equitable opportunities to engage in meaningful work experience.

Secondary

Story: Example: Secondary Years Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP) and Free Electron Start-up Program

The Rooty Hill High School Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP) provides students with an entrepreneurial learning alternative to traditional Year 10 work experience. The school's own data for over three years was indicating that work experience was not working. Often, students would be doing lower-level entry jobs, such as stacking shelves.

In 2017, the YEP social entrepreneurs participated, as equals, in a half-day session with entrepreneurs (15 international energy-based start-ups in a program called Free Electrons). A student and teacher team went onsite to Origin Energy's head office.

The student entrepreneurs shared their ideas with the 15 energy companies from around the world. The collaborative processes across the session gave the start-up teams opportunities to explain their ideas to the new Year 10 YEP and former ('alumni') YEP Year 11 students. After the session, a number of entrepreneurs found working with the students made them realise they need to work on how to explain what their enterprise is and the problem it seeks to solve.

The session's processes were relevant to people across ages (intergenerational). They reflected what the World Economic Forum sees as five key approaches to drive innovation in education systems:

- **Experiential** (integrating content into real-world applications);
- **Computational** – problem solving and understanding how computers solve problems (via some of the start-ups entrepreneurs were developing through the Free Electrons program);
- **Embodied** (incorporating the physical body into learning through movement (mixing and matching of people, spaces and tasks); and
- **Multiliteracies** focusing on diversity and the way people use and share language (adults explaining to students what their start-up is about and the problem it seeks to address);
- **Playful** (creating joyful experiences) through 'hands-on' and 'playful' tasks.²¹⁵

The environment created was an authentic place of work for the entrepreneurs, the students, and their teachers. The experience led to unprompted additional support to the school and the beginning of a new co-designed growth pathway of entrepreneurial learning for all of RHHS's Year 8 students.

Lara credits doing the school's YEP as a boost to her ambitions. Lara works part-time at Rooty Hill High

School while also studying Law and Criminal and Community Justice. Lara says:

***Believe** is the advice I would give to my younger self. You can do things you never thought you'd be able to do.... When I graduate from Law, I really don't know where the future is going to take me, being an activist, maybe politics, but I am excited to see where I do end up.*²¹⁶

Story: Doing work experience differently through Virtual Work Experience²¹⁷

Each year, thousands of students contact CSIRO wanting to do work experience. However, the CSIRO can only accept a small number (and the analysis shows this is not uncommon for many businesses, especially for SMEs). In the CSIRO's case, the reasons why they have had difficulty responding to the large number of student requests include: 1) Only a few CSIRO staff might put their hand up to be work experience volunteers; 2) Coming on site can be difficult, especially for rural and remote students, and involves a lot of processes (e.g. a two-day induction); 3) Some spaces are not designed for, or appropriate to allow students on site; and 4) Scientists need to be educated about what constitutes meaningful student work experience. The CSIRO wanted to address the challenges listed above, while simultaneously responding to the Commonwealth Government's national career education strategy call for innovative approaches to work experience. They tackled this by asking a range of questions: What if we could put teams of students together, working with each remotely? What if we could get these teams of students from around Australia, working with a STEM industry supervisor, without actually physically seeing each other and the students never actually setting foot in a CSIRO building? What if these student teams could work on a *real* project with the STEM supervisor, which means they get something out of the experience at the end, but also learn teamwork, communication and negotiation skills along the way?

The CSIRO piloted different approaches (e.g. one week work experience; one day per week for five weeks, blended delivery approaches [with groups of students meeting together and also working remotely], to other approaches where students *only* worked remotely). In all the approaches, none of the

teams ever met their STEM supervisor in person. The CSIRO STEM supervisor shared what projects they had on the go and the CSIRO advertised those projects. Students chose the project that interested them, as well as their preferred approach (i.e. blended or remote). The CSIRO did not build a new platform for the remote sessions. Instead, they looked at what platforms they already had in use.

Each student knew the projects they were working on were vitally important. They knew what they were doing was real work experience.

Typically, five students worked as a team. One group of students, for example, took control of the Parkes radio telescope. They searched for specific stars called pulsars and contributed to the CSIRO Scientist team's existing research and to the international body of scientific knowledge. Another group of students in the Northern Territory, who had never seen video conferencing before this experience, worked on brain scans with a medical researcher and came up with analyses to contribute to this research. Another student group worked on an App for pregnant women to monitor their glucose levels.

The successful models from the approaches were the ones in which there was no adult intervention, apart from that of the STEM professional supervisor. The students just got on with doing 'their stuff'.

The CSIRO wrapped an evaluation around the pilot. Sometimes things did not work (e.g. the IT system 'broke'). Initially, the workload increased for the supervisor, but then this diminished. The exception was the supervisor who had set the teams four different projects and found he was on the chat function with students all the time; the other supervisors had designed only one project per team.

Ultimately, the evaluation showed Virtual Work Experience is 'a gamechanger' for regional and remote students, who would otherwise never have got that experience. Meeting CSIRO staff, even remotely, provided students with opportunities to imagine themselves in similar roles.

The Virtual Work Experience model is not just about doing work experience in a place, it is also about doing work experience in a team of students and actually developing enterprise skills. The work experience

²¹⁶ Origin Energy Foundation. See: [Lara's story](#).

²¹⁷ Another case of a virtual work experience also features in Education Council. (2020). *Looking to the future*, p. 81.

impacts on students' decision-making, as well as their ability to make the connection between themselves, what they do in class, and what happens after their school years.

COVID-19 and the repeated lockdowns increased the urgency and importance of developing new practices in remote and blended learning, as the Rooty Hill High School 'The Explorers' and the CSIRO stories show.

Families are also members of our communities, of our schools, of our businesses. Herein lies opportunities to continue creating bridges between the school and business sectors. And, continue advancing learning as a holistic endeavour, inclusive of but not exclusive to future careers.

"When I think about businesses, I think about parents. 'Captains' of industries are sitting there asking me, what should I do as a parent? I speak also to a lot of school parent bodies as well and I get the same sort of question.

Parents are sitting in all these organisations we want to be partnering and connecting with. They are already going through the changes in their own jobs. These changes are in roles and teams and upskilling and reskilling and a shift to more of a customer focus. I feel like the children and the parents are going to 'meet' on this road."

**Jan Owen, AM Co-Founder,
Learning Creates Australia.**

Promoting family agency is another important path for family engagement and student agency.

Senior secondary

Story: Career breakfasts for career education ownership with families to enable their children

In 2020, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) partnered with their parent ambassadors (parents of university students from equity backgrounds) to create the 'Careers Breakfasts' pilot program (three sessions attended by 88 parents from three western Sydney high schools). Its ultimate aim is to support aspiring students from low SES backgrounds, at a key decision point of their lives, by empowering their parents/carers. By raising awareness about post-school

options for their children, these sessions demystify university processes and provide parents/carers with the confidence to know what questions to ask of schools and universities in support of their children.

Initially, UTS designed the 'Careers Breakfast' sessions to be face-to-face, with parents/carers enjoying breakfast while listening to a variety of speakers. Due to COVID-19, however, UTS delivered the sessions online. Sessions included such topics as the benefits of university, course selection, and pathways into university. An evaluation of the pilot program showed that the majority of parents/carers felt they had a greater understanding of education and training options for their children, as well as more confidence in supporting them with their career choices. Participants also valued the opportunity to have parent voices heard (both through parent ambassador delivery and the ability to ask questions). The collaborative approach in the design and delivery of the program had a compound effect, benefiting students, schools, parents/carers, and the university.²¹⁸

Diverse, 'real-world' industry experiences provide contexts and new avenues for partnering and promoting student-led learning and problem solving; and doing so at any stage across the education spectrum.²¹⁹

Senior secondary

Story: Swinburne Youth Space Innovation Challenge²²⁰

Annually, Swinburne University of Technology offers a 'Youth Space Innovation Challenge'. Swinburne works with the Australian Space Agency and is part of a wider network of university, research, and industry partners. Student mentors, in micro-gravity, work with teams of senior secondary students for 11-weeks. The students learn how to research and design their own experiment on important astronaut issues. Student concepts are pitched to a panel of experts, with the top three getting the opportunity to launch their experiment to the International Space Station. How to improve astronaut health and wellbeing was the 2021 design challenge, with learning more about growing yoghurt in space the winning pitch.²²¹

²¹⁸ For more information see Austin, K., O'Shea, S., Groves, O., Lamanna, J. & Singh, S. (2021). *Careers breakfasts*.

²¹⁹ See the story of Princess Hill Primary school students working directly with an architect: Adam Carey, "The children decided": Schools join quest for better gauge of student progress', *The Age*, 22 February 2021.

²²⁰ Swinburne University of Technology. Astrophysics school programs. See: [Swinburne Youth Space Innovation Challenge](#).

²²¹ Startup daily, 21 December 2021. See: '[Victorian high schoolers are trying to grow yoghurt in space.](#)'

The messages in the challenge example on the previous page and below relate equally well to other education stages. They reflect what researchers identify as important for promoting transferrable learning (e.g. use of examples and students gaining multiple opportunities to study these examples in multiple contexts). This allows students to recognise the value of learning *and* be able to apply it when learning something new (in situations that may be similar or different).²²²

Early adulthood

Story: The crop challenge

A farming group works with rural students, together with a couple of corporate sponsors to create a crop challenge. This challenge is very practical, centred on the real business of agriculture experienced by farmers on a daily basis and exposing students to its realities, irrespective of whether they are from a farm or not. The challenge involves students working with experienced farmers to deal with a crop through an entire season, competing against others to determine who can grow the most crops and the best quality. Students make decisions and interact with the farmers and agribusiness suppliers, as well as getting involved in financial matters with the farm banker. As a consequence, their learning and interactions run deep, extending beyond a single ‘event’. The approach involves Southern Farming Systems and the Birchip Cropping Group in the Wimmera and Mallee Regions of Victoria.

From sharing and critiquing their own stories, business volunteers too can model how they learned to see and make connections between an interest and future career areas.

“The funny thing is I never took gaming seriously. Gaming was an activity ‘on the side’. I chose to study psychology. I did that for one year, but noticed I wasn’t applying myself as much as I could. So, I figured I may as well take on something that I was interested in, apply myself and see if it works, and it did because there is so much opportunity ‘out there’ in the game technology and emerging technology space. And, as long as you have the mindset and the willingness to learn, you can make it in this space.”

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

In summary, when designing the type of learning experience and goals, who gets to set the learning agenda is key. The evidence points to three learning design principles to keep at the forefront:²²³

Learning design principles	Partnering watchwords
Self-determination – keep judgements and decisions with the people who best understand the students and their strengths, circumstances and community.	Make ‘it’ ‘with and by’, not ‘to and for’.
Transferrable – provide each student with a range of opportunities over time, in a variety of contexts, to learn and learn how to use their strategies of learning to make informed choices in and beyond school.	Make ‘it’ relevant. Make ‘it’ meaningful.
Impactful – show how to measure accurately and value school-business partnering, providing benefits equitably to all students.	Make ‘it’ visible. Make ‘it’ count.

²²² Anderson, M. & Beavis, A. (2017). *Evaluation Report: Social Enterprise in Schools pilot program in North-East Victoria.*

²²³The principles reflect what our analysis shows is already happening in organisations. The principles give partners choice and flexibility and a lens to see what’s working, when and for whom. Inherent are the UK Education and Employers’ four generic principles (effective, efficient, equitable and evidenced).

The evidence also suggests four key features of **best and next practice**:

- a) **Embed** ways to promote student goal setting, effective feedback and high expectations for learning.
- b) **Discover** what students are bringing to the school-business interaction (their prior experiences, strengths, interests, knowledge, skills, capabilities) as they begin their learning (that is, recognising prior learning). This is key for enabling students to see and make connections (e.g. from past to future; familiar to unfamiliar contexts or situations).
- c) **Recognise** students as active partners in their learning. This does not mean undirected learning; student want and expect adults to play enabling roles. Studies show that government secondary school students need and value their teachers. For example, students from 27 New South Wales and Victorian schools in an entrepreneurial learning initiative said they wanted their teachers to *“Step back. Not sit back.”*²²⁴
- d) **Ensure** opportunities align to a clear learning purpose (intent and success criteria) and application (e.g. for use in a student’s learning portfolio or to help them learn how to pair their interests to their subject choices and current and emerging post-school learning or employment areas).

Part 4 has shown ‘how to’ execute purposeful partnering and do so in ways that promote greater student voice, autonomy and agency. Part 5 puts forward four key actionable leadership messages to promote continuing and new ways of working together.

²²⁴Anderson, M., Hinz, B. & Matus, H. (2017). *The Paradigm Shifters*.

Documents referred to in Part 4

- AlphaBeta (2017). *The new work mindset: 7 new job clusters to help young people navigate the new work order*. Report prepared for the Foundation for Young Australians as part of the New Work Order series. Melbourne, Victoria: Foundation for Young Australians.
- Anderson, M. & Beavis, A. (2017). *Evaluation Report: Social Enterprise in Schools pilot program in North-East Victoria*. Prepared for the Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship.
- Anderson, M., Hinz, B. and Matus, H. (2017). *The Paradigm Shifters: Entrepreneurial Learning in Schools*. Research report, Mitchell Institute Report No. 04/2017. Melbourne: Mitchell Institute.
- 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. www.uow.edu.au/engage/outreach-pathways/research-projects/
- Commission for Children and Young People. (2021). *Empowerment and participation: A guide for organisations working with children and young people*. Melbourne, Victoria: Commission for Children and Young People.
- Dempsey, S. (2020). 'Mind the gap' *The public wants CEOs to speak out on social issues, according to the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer*, V.36, Issue 02, p. 14. Australian Institute of Company Directors, AICD.
- Department of Education and Training, Victoria. (2020). *Review into vocational and applied learning pathways in senior secondary school: Final Report*. Melbourne, Victoria: Department of Education and Training.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2012). *Evaluate to grow: A guide to getting the most out of your school-business relationship through evaluation*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- 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.
- Education Council. (2014). *Preparing Secondary Students for Work. A framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students*. Education Council.
- Future First. (2019). *Young people, their futures and access to relatable role models*. Future First.
- Harwood, V., McMahon, S., O'Shea, S., Bodkin-Andrews, G. & Priestly, A. (2015). Recognising aspiration: The AIME program's effectiveness in inspiring Indigenous young people's participation in schooling and opportunities for further education and employment. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 42 (2), 217-236.; also referenced by Social Ventures Australia via aimementoring.com and www.socialventures.com.au/work/australian-indigenous-mentoring-experience-aime/#:~:text=AIME%20is%20an%20educational%20program,students%20to%20finish%20high%20school.
- Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2017). *The power of moments: Why certain experiences have extraordinary impact*. Simon & Schuster.
- Lonsdale, M. (2011). *School community partnerships in Australian schools*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Mann, A., Rehill, J., & Kashefpakdel, E. (2018). *Employer engagement in education: Insights from international evidence for effective practice and future research*. London, England: Education and Employers Taskforce.
- Mann, A., Dawkins, J., & McKeown, R. (2017). *Towards an employer engagement toolkit: British teachers' perspectives on the comparative efficacy of work-related learning activities*. London: Education and Employers 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.

Misko, J., Chew, E. & Korbel, P. (2020). *VET for secondary school students: Post-school employment and further training destinations*. Adelaide, NCVET.

Percy, C. & Rogers, M. (2021). *The value of volunteering: Volunteering in education and productivity at work*. OECD.

(2017). "What drives public trust? Identifying the policy levers", in *Trust and Public Policy: How Better Governance Can Help Rebuild Public Trust*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Rothman, S. (2019). *What do schools want from engagement with business? Final report submitted to the Australian Business and Community Network*. Camberwell, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Shier, H. (2019). 'Student voice and children's rights: Power, empowerment, and "Protagonismo"' in Peters, M. A. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of teacher education*. Singapore: Springer.

Singhania, A., Hard, N., & Bentley, T. (2020). *Unleashing the power of the collective education: The impact evaluation of SVA Bright Spots Schools Connection*. RMIT University.

Vukovic, R. (2020). 'How student voice has evolved over time', *Teacher*. Available via: www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/articles/how-student-voice-has-evolved-over-time

World Economic Forum. (2020). *Schools of the future: Defining new models of education for the fourth industrial revolution*. Switzerland: World Economic Forum.

Zhao, Y. (2018). *Reach for Greatness: Personalizable Education for All Children*. Corwin Impact Leadership Series. Canada, Corwin, A SAGE Publishing Company.

Engaging with students.

Addressing their questions.

The processes and analysis for this paper led to the development of the following key questions. The questions expose areas that might be holding students back from *believing* they can and *are able* to chart a learning and employability path that best fits them. Addressing these questions can help lower the burden on students.

Students are wondering and asking	
Striving for educational excellence and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do I discover what my strengths, interests and passions are at present? ● How do I make decisions based on what I really want to do and not just what I'm good at? ● How can I become more confident about what I'd like to do as I get older?
No educational excellence for our nation without equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why aren't we able to get the kinds of opportunities we need that we see or hear other students in other schools are getting? ● Why am I putting-off what I do next? ● Who was your inspiration? Do you love what you do? ● How can I learn how to change courses or jobs?
Excellence and equity through opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can it be easier for me (and students like me) to connect with business and not miss out? ● How do you develop your skills to a high degree? ● How do I develop key capabilities for jobs that don't even exist yet? ● How can I, as a 13-year-old, develop technology skills?

Becoming both entrepreneurial and employable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can (or why can't) I see that what I am doing in school links to the 'real world'? ● How much do I see my future self as being a job seeker or a job creator? ● How do I/we solve problems in the world, in my community? ● What are your [business volunteer] future goals and future career goals?
Currency of assessment and assessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What if my interests change over time? ● What do employers expect of a new employee? ● How do I teach myself how to make 'good moves' in life? ● If you could change your job, would you? How? ● How do you get to use your skills?
Currency of industry information and advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What if I don't know yet what I want to do in the future? What's the best advice you could give me? ● How can I learn to make decisions now to keep my future choices open? ● Why did you [business volunteer] choose 'x' company over other companies?

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