



bringing careers into the curriculum

studyworkgrow

2022

Table of Contents

01

What is 'Careers in the Curriculum'?

02

What changes when we connect careers with the curriculum?

03

Teachers are the crucial factor

04

Recommendations for school-based approaches

Introduction

Preparing young people for their lives once school is over is not a simple process, and the best approach requires multiple interventions delivered throughout their educational journey.

Fortunately, young people are surrounded by engaged educators who want the best possible outcomes for the students in their care, and these educators do an amazing job of delivering programs that engage and inspire.

Embedding career learning within the curriculum is only one of the approaches which proactive schools can take, but it offers significant benefits for the development of career management skills and student engagement with content.

Linking career pathways with the curriculum can lead to the following:

- Classroom learning relates to real-world applications
- Increased awareness of a variety of career pathways
- Enhanced links between school and industry
- Increased classroom engagement
- Improved student outcomes

Students who understand the point of their education can connect it to possible future pathways.

They are also more likely to engage with the material covered in class, leading to improved engagement, increased academic and behavioural outcomes, and improved classroom culture.

From the Future Ready Report

(Ithaca Group, 2019)

Recommendation 8 -
Develop curriculum support resources... to raise awareness of links between learning areas and career education among learning area teachers...

What is 'Careers in the Curriculum'?

The curriculum is the formal learning required to be delivered by the school, and in many places career education is not specified or mandated as part of the curriculum.

There are two distinct aspects of integrating career learning within the curriculum:

1. Teaching essential career management skills, such as decision making and teamwork, and
2. Connecting classroom content with career pathways

While it is important that students gain the career management capabilities they need to thrive in the work place, these skills are often taught on their own as part of additional student wellbeing or mentoring programs.

Instead, the ultimate focus of embedding career-learning within the classroom should be to increase the students' knowledge about pathways, and show them how what

they learn today will benefit them in years to come.

It takes specific skills to connect curriculum content with the labour market, and teachers should be supported in this endeavour by school-based career development professionals.

Teachers can then integrate career linkage within their lesson plans in a way that doesn't disrupt the teaching and is relevant to their individual learners.

This means we need a more robust approach than simply asking students to write a poem about a career they are interested in.

Instead, the teacher should be able to explain how the skills students gain through writing complex texts like poems will prepare them to write complex text in their careers.

This will help students relate the skills they are developing to their future, and they will also be able to build a more accurate understanding of their strengths and limitations.

“Students feel a sense of autonomy when doing work that, rather than simply fulfilling school requirements, relates to their interests and has personal meaning...”

School context, achievement motivation, and academic engagement: A longitudinal study of school engagement using a multidimensional perspective (Wang & Eccles, 2013)

How does it work?

When teachers explain how their content relates to the real world, it becomes relevant for students.

Student disengagement is a big problem, almost all our schools tell us it's hard to motivate their students and to get them to think about what comes next.

Even high-performing schools have the same issue.

Not every disengaged student is the same however, some have complex learning needs, others are dealing with trauma or mental health concerns, and many just don't see the point.

But the research shows that disengaged students benefit from understanding the utility value of their lessons (Assor et al., 2002).

The size of the problem cannot be overstated.

It's estimated that two thirds of students in high performing schools have disengaged from their learning, emotionally, cognitively, or behaviourally (and often all three at once).

When you look at the adult disengagement numbers, which are up around 86%, it's clear that the patterns and attitudes that are being developed in school have lifelong implications (Fredricks et al., 2019, Gallup, Inc., 2017).

In fact, we believe that students learn 'habits of disengagement' that follow them through into their adult lives.



79%

Of adults worldwide are not fully engaged at work

- State of the Global Workplace (Gallup, 2022)

Multiple studies have found that fostering relevance in the classroom leads to positive outcomes, both academic and motivational, for all students, including those who would normally be considered as 'high achievers' (Assor et al., 2002, Rosenzweig et al., 2019).

This works because students feel that when they understand the point of their learning they can easily connect the content with their future.

Educators who explain the skills developed in class, and then show how these skills could be used in the workplace, complete the circle for the students, who lack the skills and ability to do this for themselves.

"Student engagement increases when students feel that the curriculum is relevant to their lives."

Not Just Robo-Students: Why Full Engagement Matters and How Schools Can Promote It (Conner & Pope, 2013)

Teachers are the crucial factor

Students turn to influential people in their lives when they make important decisions about their careers, and the evidence shows that often they will look to their teachers for support, advice, and guidance well before they will approach their school's career development professional (Tey et al., 2020, Vernon & Drane, 2020a, 2020b).

It's not that we should expect teachers to take on an extra burden and guide their students' career decisions – the reality is that this is already happening, although many teachers may not even realising this is taking place.

The 'guidance' which teachers deliver rarely looks like a formal meeting with the stated purpose to discuss career planning.

Instead, teachers will voice their opinions about career pathways, pass judgement (positive and negative) on their own career path and that of others they know, and bring their own experiences to the conversation (Collins & Barnes, 2017).

Teachers are experts in their respective subject areas, and they should be recognised as such. Their work is comprehensive and curriculum-driven, but career guidance delivery is not part of their professional remit.

They need support from qualified career development professionals to connect their subjects to the labour market.

A Career Development Professional, embedded within the school, can be a valuable resource for subject area teachers who are engaging in informal guidance and career conversations with their students.

With the right support, teachers can take a positive and influential role in supporting the career development of their students (Wang & Eccles, 2013).

Recommendations

As discussed, there are a number of steps schools can take to embed career-related learning within the existing curriculum. Whilst every school is unique, and all schools should carefully consider their own programs and platforms, we would like to offer these key recommendations for the implementation of interventions.

01

Learning should be stage appropriate

Throughout their childhood, children build their skills, develop their identity, and make decisions about the type of person they are, and who they want to become.

Interventions which embed career learning within the curriculum should be tailored to the developmental stage of the learner and adjusted for diverse development profiles.

Early Childhood

Children in Early Childhood are still learning about what's out there, and learning experiences should focus on exposing them to a wide range of possible pathways. It is important at this stage that children aren't only exposed to stereotypical jobs for their gender, race, academic potential, or socio-economic status, and children should also have the opportunity to 'go deep' on some jobs, so they learn about more than just the uniform.

Primary School

Primary School is a great opportunity for children to begin exploring an even wider range of jobs, as they also learn about their skills. By this age, children are able to develop an understanding of their unique skills and interests, which solidify towards the end of this stage, and if given the opportunity they can compare their skills and interests with a range of career pathways. Talking explicitly about skills, not just academic performance, can help students refine their identity.

Secondary School

By the Secondary Years children have generally crystalised their interests and begun the process of formal exploration.

They will identify careers of interest, learn about these incidentally and/or proactively, and refine their Vocational Identity over this period. Chance encounters with jobs can be particularly powerful and linking work they do in class with a range of diverse career paths can help them identify a wider range of possible pathways than they would have otherwise had access to.

Interventions which do not take the child's developmental stage into consideration run the risk of confusing the child or entrenching bias, so, for example, children shouldn't be asked to complete 'personality' tests before senior secondary school, as this increases the chances that the child will self-limit.

02

Work with industry and employers

Incorporating experiences and insights direct from employers and industry bodies is a great way to engage students and build visible pathways from school to work.

This process improves student understanding of the labour market, and when educators engage with local industry and employers' students can imagine their futures and spot opportunities close to home.

Engaging with industry and employers also builds understanding among the teacher cohort, which improves the accuracy of guidance they offer to students.

03

Create school-based Career Leadership

Career Development Professionals bring a wealth of knowledge and capability to the conversation, and can champion the implementation of interventions which embed career learning within the curriculum.

Crucially, assigning a Career Leader (preferably one with appropriate qualifications) gives the remainder of the teaching staff a single point of contact for any questions or concerns.

Raising the profile of the Career Leader within the school can improve teacher confidence in delivering career-related learning, and this person can also be responsible for Professional Development which further increases teacher capacity.

04

Build a 'Career Mindset' in your school

One of the key roles of school is to prepare young people for their futures, and a school-wide approach that positions life-readiness front-and-centre ensures students feel confident and prepared to face their key transitions.

This approach gives young people and their families space to ask questions, show interest, and engage with the process, so that students can make informed, confident decisions about their future.

Not only can this approach improve mental wellbeing among students, particularly during their final years of school, but it can also improve the quality of the transitions being made, and reduce the length of time it takes students to find meaningful work once school is over.

In summary

Developing a program which embeds career-related learning within the curriculum can deliver multiple benefits for the school, teachers, students, and families, but creating such a program can take time.

At Study Work Grow, we believe that all students should have the opportunity to make the best possible transition from school to work, which is why we deliver inclusive, equitable, and engaging career programs designed by career development professionals and educators. We welcome all schools and educators to join us in delivering the best possible outcome for our young people.

Further reading

[Careers in the Curriculum: What works?](#)

[Future Ready: Research on incorporating career education in the Australian Curriculum](#)

[Connecting the worlds of learning and work: Prioritising school-industry partnerships in Australia's education system](#)

References

- Assor, A., Kaplan, H., & Roth, G. (2002). Choice is good, but relevance is excellent: Autonomy-enhancing and suppressing teacher behaviours predicting students' engagement in schoolwork. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 72(2), 261–278.
- Collins, J., & Barnes, A. (2017). *Careers in the curriculum. What works?* The Careers & Enterprise Company.
- Conner, J. O., & Pope, D. C. (2013). Not just robo-students: Why full engagement matters and how schools can promote it. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(9), 1426–1442.
- Fredricks, J. A., Ye, F., Wang, M.-T., & Brauer, S. (2019). Profiles of school disengagement: Not all disengaged students are alike. In J. A. Fredricks, A. L. Reschly, & S. L. Christenson (Eds.), *Handbook of Student Engagement Interventions* (pp. 31–43). Academic Press.
- Gallup, Inc. (2017). *State of the global workplace*.
- Rosenzweig, E. Q., Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2019). Expectancy-value theory and its relevance for student motivation and learning. In *The Cambridge handbook of motivation and learning* (pp. 617–644). Cambridge University Press.
- Tey, T. C. Y., Moses, P., & Cheah, P. K. (2020). Teacher, parental and friend influences on STEM interest and career choice intention. *Issues in Educational Research*.
- Vernon, L., & Drane, C. (2020a). *Making career decisions: How influencers can help* (Myfuture Career Insight Series). Education Services Australia.
- Vernon, L., & Drane, C. F. (2020b). Influencers: The importance of discussions with parents, teachers and friends to support vocational and university pathways. *International Journal of Training Research*, 18(2), 155–173.
- Wang, M.-T., & Eccles, J. S. (2013). School context, achievement motivation, and academic engagement: A longitudinal study of school engagement using a multidimensional perspective. *Learning and Instruction*, 28, 12–23.

studyworkgrow

p. + 61 7 4039 3862

e. info@studyworkgrow.com.au

Study Work Grow has exercised its best efforts and judgement in compiling the information in this report, however you acknowledge that: 1) it is provided for information and general advisory purposes only and does not constitute professional, legal or career advice; 2) to the extent permitted by, law we make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied; 3) you release us from liability for any loss, damage or expense resulting or arising from your use of or reliance on this report.

All rights are reserved.

studyworkgrow.com.au