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1.0 Executive Summary

Purpose and Scope

The central tasks of the Evaluation were to identify the level of achievement of the School to Work Program, and the opportunities for encouraging further effective engagement with it. A series of strategic interviews and Regional focus groups were held with participants who have extensive experience of the Program and who achieved some level of success. From the data that was collected, the features that constitute good practice were extracted, from which conclusions and opportunities were drawn.

Achievements

This Evaluation identified a number of significant successful outcomes arising from the effective planning and implementation of the School to Work program. The major achievements identified in the evidence have been:

- the integration of vocational learning across the Key Learning Areas (KLAs)
- students planning transition pathways
- students exploring career futures
- strengthening student outcomes through vocational learning
- enterprise learning
- revitalised career education
- individualised learning experiences
- targeted learning experiences
- access assured for all students
- engaging with students before Year 9
- measuring and reporting individual student outcomes.

Where these have occurred, they have resulted in increased student self-confidence and increased student retention and engagement.

Opportunities

This Evaluation has identified a large number of processes and practices which have been beneficial in achieving the aims of School to Work. Chapters 5 to 8 distil the data collected into features that are associated with the effective planning and implementation of School to Work.

Chapter 9 focuses on these features to draw conclusions and identify the opportunities which consolidate or extend the practices that support School to Work initiatives within schools. As well, this chapter provides the detail on how they can be achieved, with access to State and Regional support.

There are opportunities for Regional and school efforts to:

- obtain the support of the school senior executive. This was the single most commonly reported determinant of a school’s participation in School to Work.
- encourage whole school planning, which facilitates teachers from different areas sharing ideas and helps initiatives become embedded in school practice
- establish School to Work Teams, which unlock synergies, build enthusiasm and energy and share the load of the Program
- extend the integration of vocational learning throughout the curriculum and extend students’ opportunities and experience with planning transitions and learning employability skills
- invest in building the awareness and skills of younger students (i.e. before Stage 5) to support them in their transition from school to work, using a developmentally appropriate approach
- broaden the view of enterprise learning and its relationships to successful youth transitions
- extend Regional planning, to acknowledge and share learnings from those schools that have achieved significant success with the Program, and to more strongly encourage and lead those that have not yet done so
- extend the professional learning that builds the capacities and confidence of the teachers and school executive who are planning and implementing the Program.
- share ideas, experiences, suggestions and solutions amongst Regions and schools
- build and strengthen connections and networks with parents, employers and the community
- extend the use of the resources such as the Employment Related Skills Logbook, the Key Learning Area curriculum booklets, the Student Pathways Survey and the funding processes.
2.0. Introduction

2.1. The School to Work Program

The NSW government agenda for youth transitions includes improving the quality of school to work transitions. In 1999 a pilot program was implemented, involving a total of 98 secondary schools across the State. This pilot achieved a demonstrable increase in the self-esteem of students “at risk”, and the Program was expanded in 2000 to 317 government secondary, central schools and schools for specific purposes, targeting over 14,000 students, with annual increases in the number of schools and students involved.

Guided by the information obtained from report data collected, the Program was refined and adjusted, and School to Work: Creating Future Pathways was implemented in 2004. The Annual Reports indicate that the Program has expanded, and it now has an impact in the majority of NSW public secondary schools, central schools and schools for specific purposes: For 2005, 481 schools reported that they are using the School to Work Program, involving 158,838 students across Years 7 to 12.

1.2. Objectives of the Program

The New South Wales School to Work Program was designed to assist students in planning and managing their transitions to a range of post-school education, training and employment options. In 2004, the vision was articulated as follows:

“All students in New South Wales government secondary schools will be enterprising and capable citizens well prepared for creating their own future pathways. They will take on personal leadership and responsibility for planning and self-managing their career transitions to construct a fulfilling and productive life. They will have the skills and confidence to become independent, self-aware, resourceful and critically alert to the choices and opportunities available as they move through and beyond school.”

To achieve this vision, these four main priority areas were identified.

“This Program will achieve its vision by focusing on four key result areas:

Planning Transition Pathways – supporting students to develop confidence in self-managing their career and transition planning

Exploring Career Futures – providing students with access to people, opportunities and a variety of media, which assists them to process information about work, education and training options

Strengthening Student Outcomes through Vocational Learning – supporting teachers to identify and provide a range of opportunities for students to make explicit links to vocational and enterprise learning in all curriculum areas

Building Networks and Connections – strengthening career, community and workplace learning opportunities for students through strategic connections, partnerships and networks.”

1 School to Work – Creating Future Pathways, Vocational Education in Schools Directorate, 2004 p3
2 Ibid. p9
3.0 Methodology

3.1 Purpose and scope of this Evaluation

An extensive scoping exercise was performed to maximise the effectiveness of this Evaluation. From that exercise, the following Terms of Reference were developed:

1. **Research**: Provide advice on approaches to transition from school to work nationally and internationally, including a review of the relevant literature. (It was later indicated that the other Terms were to be the focus of the Evaluation.)

2. **Planning and Practice**: Review the impact of the School to Work Program on school planning and practice, and provide advice on how the Program could better address the career and transition needs of students in NSW government schools.

3. **Professional Learning**: Review approaches to and practices in professional learning, and identify opportunities that could further enhance the capacity of teachers to implement the School to Work Program.

4. **Partnerships**: Review the effectiveness of partnerships between school, employers and parents implemented under the auspices of the School to Work Program, and identify opportunities for such partnerships to have increased impact on students’ career transition planning and experiences.

5. **Resources**: Review approaches to and practices in the application of Program resources, including the Employment Related Skills Logbook, and identify further ways in which resources could be managed efficiently and effectively to support students’ transition from school to work.

The evaluation will provide advice, reporting practices for the future and on options for future work in the Program’s four priority areas of:

- planning transition pathways
- exploring career futures
- strengthening student outcomes through vocational learning
- building connections and networks.

3.2 Encouraging effective engagement

One of the central tasks of the Evaluation was to identify how to encourage effective engagement with the School to Work Program. The Evaluation was designed to identify successful practices, and to determine what can be learnt from them to further strengthen and extend the Program. People who have extensive experience of the Program and who have achieved some level of success in implementing it were invited to participate in this Evaluation.

The features that constitute good practice were extracted from the data that was collected from these participants.

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3 Report: Scoping Exercise to Evaluate the School to Work Program, Atelier Learning Solutions, 2006
4 Proposal for Evaluation of NSW School to Work Program, Vocational Education in Schools Directorate 2006
3.3 Data collection

To maximise the reach of the input used, quantitative and qualitative data was collected using these four separate approaches, each with its own focus:

- **Research**: National literature on the transition from school to work was reviewed, to position the Program within its broader context, and to identify the extent to which it is consistent with current understandings of effective priorities and processes for achieving successful youth transitions.

- **Regional Focus Groups**: Experiences were collected from people who have engaged successfully with *School to Work*, across New South Wales, in all the roles associated with the Program. These focus groups were designed to have approximately 8 participants in each Region, including a Careers Adviser, parent, student (preferably those who have been involved with the Program over a number of years, and possibly two students, to support each other), teacher, Principals or Deputy Principals, and an employer who has had a close connection with the Program. All the Regions were invited to participate and all but one were able to do so. The stimulus questions used in the Focus Groups are given in Appendix A.

- **Strategic interviews**: Telephone or face-to-face interviews were held with 14 strategic stakeholders to obtain their interpretation of current national priorities in student transition, the key strategic imperatives around student transition on which the Program should have an increased focus, and what changes, if any, are required to enable these to be addressed. The stimulus questions used in the Strategic interviews are given in Appendix A.

- **Case Studies**: Some examples of initiatives were described which exemplify particular features of best practice in *School to Work*.

Each year, schools contribute data to the *School to Work* Annual Report. This extensive data source was an invaluable complement to the mainly qualitative data collected in the focus groups and strategic interviews. In particular, this Evaluation has drawn from the data provided by schools and Regions, contained in the *2005 School to Work Annual Report*.

**Participants**

The Evaluation was designed to reach extensively into a wide range of the stakeholder groups affected by the Program. This section identifies the types of participants in the Focus Groups and Strategic Interviews.

**Regional Focus Groups**

Within the constraints of this Evaluation, data was collected from nine Regions, involving 69 individuals with the following roles:

- students (9)
- parent (1)
- mentor (1)
- employer (1)
- teachers (13)
- careers advisers (11)
- principals (8)
- deputy principals / assistant principal (SSP) (4)
- Regional vocational education consultant (15)
- *School to Work* support officer / project officer / coordinator (5)
- Senior Executive Officer 2 Quality teaching and vocational education (1).
Participants identified that they were from the following types of location, indicating that the Evaluation involved people with a wide range of perspectives:

- urban, suburban (36 per cent)
- regional, town (49 per cent)
- rural, remote (15 per cent).

Overall, the participants were very familiar with the Program, with an average of 5.5 years of experience with School to Work.

Participants were asked at the end of the focus groups to give feedback about the process used, and an indication of what could have been done differently. Most participants indicated that the questions promoted discussion; they valued having their opinions heard, and hearing other people’s experiences and ideas. Some wished there had been opportunity for more discussion, or that others had been able to attend.

**Strategic Interviews**

In-depth conversations were held with 14 individuals with an awareness of the key strategic issues for the Program:

- Local Community Partnerships (CEOs, Program Managers, etc) (4)
- Regional Industry Careers Adviser (2)
- careers advisers (2)
- school executive (1)
- Department of Education, Science and Training representative (1)
- Office of the Board of Studies representative (1)
- NSW Department of Education and Training: Strategic Initiatives Directorate (1)
- NSW Department of Education and Training: Curriculum Directorate (1)
- NSW Department of Education and Training: Vocational Education in Schools Directorate (1).

With their varied backgrounds and roles, these people provided a wide range of perspectives and insights.

3.4 Acknowledgements

The authors express their gratitude to the following people who have contributed significantly to the Evaluation:

- Regional vocational education consultants and School to Work coordinators, for arranging the focus groups and inviting suitable participants to attend
- Participants in the Strategic Interviews and focus groups, for sharing their perspectives and insights
- John Moore, Atelier Learning Solutions, for some very useful data analysis conversations and feedback.

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6 One Region found that the time frame for this Evaluation was too short for them to be able to provide any input.
4.0 The National Agenda on Careers and Transition

For many years, the Australian Government and the State and Territory education authorities have been actively supporting and encouraging effective career education and transition support. This section describes some of these initiatives, which indicates that the School to Work Program is centrally placed within the national agenda on youth transitions.

In 1999, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, agreed to The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century, which “entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes of:

- further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community
- enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession
- continuing to develop curriculum and related systems of assessment, accreditation and credentialling that promote quality and are nationally recognised and valued
- increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students’ levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated.”

Through a Framework and Implementation strategy for Vocational Education in 2001, all MCEETYA Ministers endorsed the need for effective transition pathways for all young people:

“Vision: Vocational education in schools assists all young people to secure their own futures by enhancing their transition to a broad range of post-school options and pathways. It engages students in work related learning built on strategic partnerships between schools, business, industry and the wider community.

Principles

1. Vocational education is an essential and valid element of the education of all students.
2. Vocational education will improve the transition of young people from school to work by acknowledging the importance of lifelong learning.
3. Vocational education will facilitate young people learning in a variety of settings, including the classroom, workplace and the wider community.
4. Vocational education will integrate a range of school-to-work initiatives and facilitate the involvement of employers, industry and the community generally.
5. Vocational education is a shared responsibility in the community and fosters collaboration between education, business, government and community interests.
6. Vocational education will ensure, through creative and flexible approaches, that all students have access to the widest possible range of its programs so they can acquire broad work-related skills and competencies to the highest possible level.
7. Vocational education will ensure that students and their school communities have a recognised, significant and valued role in contributing to social, regional and economic development.”

This established a broadening of the agenda for vocational education, within which the School to Work Program is situated.
The 2001 declaration: *Stepping Forward: Improving Pathways For All Young People* represented a national commitment to:

- "listen and respond to young people"
- work creatively in partnership with young people to build comprehensive networks to address the complex issues confronting young people
- recognise and address structural barriers faced by young people
- ensure that our governmental systems recognise the diversity of young people through being inclusive, flexible and adaptive
- create effective opportunities for young people that are accessible, integrated and meaningful
- encourage young people to take increasing responsibility for their own lives, support their peers and contribute to their community
- ensure that young people have the information, skills and support needed to negotiate the transition to adult life and to make informed life decisions."

The *School to Work* Program actively and explicitly focuses on achieving many of these central elements of the national agenda on careers and youth transitions.

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5.0 Findings: Planning and Practice

The Vocational Education in Schools Directorate (the Directorate) envisaged that for School to Work to be implemented successfully, it would require effective planning. To facilitate this, the Directorate provided planning documents and tools to all secondary and central schools and to key stakeholders.

The resource School to Work Planning 2001 suggested that "School to Work planning is most effective when seen in the context of a whole-school approach to its management and implementation", and provided a checklist for developing such an approach. It argued that linking School to Work planning into the school’s management plan would provide the scope, context and direction for the implementation, and utilise existing school processes and management structures. It indicated the important roles that the school senior executive and Careers Advisers would have in promoting the Program and the need for other members of the staff to be involved in setting the directions and processes to be used.

This chapter summarises the data collected that describes the impact School to Work has had on planning and practice within schools.

5.1 Support from the school senior executive

The support of the school senior executive was the single most commonly reported determinant of a school’s successful participation in School to Work. This point was made repeatedly in the interviews and focus groups: where the senior executive placed high value on School to Work, and is committed to its implementation throughout the school, then School to Work becomes much more embedded in whole school planning and practice. Examples were given of the senior executive driving a focus on School to Work in the school management plan, staff development days, development of Key Learning Area (KLA) programs, allocation of budget including teacher professional development learning funds, assessment and student reporting.

Conversely, where the senior executive has not yet fully embraced School to Work, the full potential of this Program appears to be not as substantially realised. However, even in these contexts it is possible to identify effort within the parameters of the Program. Evidence was cited of instances where teachers were able to implement those aspects of School to Work that fall within their own areas of responsibility.

At the same time, it is possible to discern a desire to be connected to the Program more fully. Some Careers Advisers and teachers who reported that they did not have senior executive support felt some frustration that they were not able to do more under the auspices of the Program.

“Where you can take a school is very much in the hands of the Deputies and Principal”
– School or regional representative

“It’s not going to happen unless I feed [support] the people who are trying to do it.”  - Principal

“[We] encourage a Deputy to be School to Work coordinator” - Careers Adviser

There is substantial evidence that where the principal or deputy principal has particularly strong enterprising skills, they are skilled at taking School to Work to a new level. It is these staff members who appear best placed to make linkages with local employers and the community.

Evidence in individual situations for this Program outcome is compelling. At its most advanced, the support of one school’s senior executive helped achieve higher retention of Years 7 and 8 Indigenous students by sharing some “ownership” of the school, and by promoting and marketing the school within that community.
At another school, the senior executive has a strong emphasis on applying for funding available for various sustainability projects. These have included water harvesting and solar panels.

There is acknowledgement of an explicit motivation to model enterprising skills to their staff and students. The flow-on effects for the Program are regarded as very significant.

“Work makes men and women” - Principal

“Young people who feel they contribute make better citizens” - Principal

“[We want to help students] make the transition with dignity and purpose” - Principal

Participants indicated that the senior executive is often driven by their interest in helping their students achieve both employability skills and academic success. These senior executive have a broad conception of the purposes of schooling, and so they place value on engaging in initiatives that promote understanding of employment and work, and in planning for transitions. They identify the Program as a key vehicle for achieving important schooling and transition objectives.

5.2 Whole school planning

The effective implementation of School to Work has reinforced the importance of whole school planning which involves the collaboration of staff from across the school in structuring school processes (including schedules and timetables) and in allocating resources (including financial, personnel and learning spaces).

The data contains a variety of examples:

- School to Work-related items were included in school staff development days
- School to Work and/or careers items were established as a standard item at staff meetings
- particular in-school School to Work events were scheduled involving students across the whole school; particular times of the term or year were designated for a focus on School to Work within Key Learning Areas, sometimes with explicit staff agreement that the Logbook would be used within the KLAs during those times
- links were made between School to Work and other school programs such as leadership, boys education and welfare (these links are explored further, below).

At its most developed, whole school planning led to the assessment and logging of employability skills throughout the school, and the development of cross-KLA curricula and extended learning experiences. The following quotes from participants are representative of the Evaluation data collected:

“School to Work [is] becoming embedded in school plans and school ‘cultures’ – a greater understanding of schools about reliance and importance of all students having [access to] vocational education”

– School or regional representative

“[It has forced us to find] alternative ways of doing things eg storage, timetabling” – Careers Adviser

“Changing [our] programming, [we are] using the primary school Connected Outcome Groups model [as a] useful framework to model [our] embedded programs”

– School or regional representative

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(In 2001, the Directorate was called the Vocational Education and Training in Schools Directorate).
“Make a role for School to Work and VET in budget allocation, teacher professional learning funds [and a] commitment to resource [School to Work]”
– School or regional representative

“Whole school planning – the significant added structure enables schools to better work with [Local Community Partnerships], especially in relation to Career and Transition Support” – School or regional representative

Adopting a whole school planning approach is enabling schools to exhibit greater flexibility. Some participants indicated that their schools have developed flexible ways of accommodating the disruption that occurs when whole cohorts were involved in in-school or out-of-school learning experiences, such as mock job interviews or industry visits.

“[In our school, we enter] data [into the Logbook] once a term in every class 9-11” – School representative

“[Now there is] greater involvement of KLA head teachers in driving the School to Work agenda”
– School or regional representative

In many schools where School to Work is well embraced, it reaches across KLAs, encouraging conversations between KLAs in which staff cooperate and collaborate in ways that many recognise improbable without the impetus of the Program.
5.3 School to Work Teams

The Directorate envisaged that School to Work would require team-based implementation. It encouraged schools to identify appropriate individuals and groups whose support and participation could be harnessed from within the school and from the wider local community.

Many schools which have enjoyed success in the implementation of School to Work have formed School to Work teams (some-times called a “committee”, “coordinating group” or “working party”). Participants identified the value of these teams as being that they share and build their members’ enthusiasm, and take advantage of the dynamics of group-membership to encourage ownership and continued effort. Also, they provide crucial continuity when individual staff members leave or move onto other duties or interests. The evidence suggests that School to Work teams have played a key role in underpinning the sustainability of the School to Work Program.

A School to Work team also encourages a broadened sense of responsibility and accountability for School to Work. In instances where one person was perhaps primarily accountable for School to Work (frequently a Careers Adviser), the team structure helped broaden the effort, through the devolution of tasks and responsibilities to other team members.

Data gathered and analysed during the evaluation indicate that School to Work teams have a variety of compositions. Typically, they include the Careers Adviser, a Deputy Principal, the Principal, the Head Teachers and other teachers. Such a composition was found to facilitate and encourage inter-KLA conversations and collaboration (see next section), and often led to linkages between School to Work and other programs within the school (as described in the next section).

“I was talking to some people. They said that they are the School to Work team. They also said they are the Welfare team. So it was easy for them to develop programs that did both.” – Regional Consultant

Having seen the value of School to Work teams, some schools reported the extra value that they were looking for by including parents, employers, cultural leaders (such as indigenous elders). They indicated that with those additions, they believed they would be able to access a wider range of community resources and achieve community ownership and endorsement of the Program.

“[Our school has] a School to Work committee, parents are invited at the start of the year [to join]”

– Careers Adviser

This is a very significant outcome for the Program, and shows how much it has become embedded in the practice in many New South Wales government schools.

5.4 Integration of vocational learning throughout the curriculum

Inter-Key Learning Area conversations and collaboration

The School to Work Program was designed to be implemented through a range of flexible, responsive and considered approaches. Many of the approaches are predicated on the collaboration of staff from different KLAs, when they cooperate to plan, coordinate their use of School to Work resources such as the Employment Related Skills Logbook, deliver cross-curricula programs, or address together issues and difficulties that arise.

Such collaboration necessarily occurs in those schools that have a School to Work team with members from different KLAs. However, this collaboration is also useful outside the School to Work team.
The evaluation data indicates that School to Work has encouraged staff from different KLAs to collaborate. For example, at one school a whole cohort went to a careers expo, which necessitated adjustments to an existing assessment schedule. However, the success of that activity led to staff acceptance of its value, which encouraged staff from various KLAs to check with each other and the School to Work plan KLA checking when establishing future assessment schedules.

Another school used a regular “School to Work segment” at staff meetings to incorporate School to Work into wider school programs. Increased cross-KLA communication led to whole school activities such as logging of employability skills and the development of student reports and school references that include references to the student’s achievement of employability skills.

Tailoring Programs to particular student needs

Effective plans developed through the School to Work Program explicitly meet the needs of the people they are intended to serve. The Program demonstrates that this can occur at both the local and Regional level.

“Schools need to identify the range of strategies appropriate to the students being targeted” ¹¹

“Regional personnel are well placed to identify and meet the needs of their communities and their students.” ¹²

In the Evaluation data there are many examples of School to Work successes where teachers had developed a way of meeting the needs of a particular group of students. For example, for a group of disengaged students, a deputy principal devised and participated in a paving project at the school, one day per week. The project influenced a new school organisation arrangement, with which students were more comfortable. As a consequence, students demonstrated their employability skills, displayed increased self-confidence and accessed informal mentoring opportunities. The evidence shows that many were able to achieve TAFE qualifications and apprenticeships as a consequence of initial activity arising from the Program.

Many schools have Student Representative Councils, giving students a say in some matters within the school. Those schools who engaged successfully in School to Work were able to utilise such forums and build student engagement processes around them. They were able to hear from and engage with students about what they needed for their lives. The evidence suggests that, as a consequence, many schools were better placed to be able to adapt the Program to meet the needs of their students.

¹¹ Op. cit. p19
¹² Op. cit. p8
Holistic approaches to student learning

School to Work is designed to meet transition needs which do not fit easily within a single speciality area or KLA. For example, many broad-based learning experiences can build student’s self-confidence and self-esteem, and for this reason, these are an important approach to helping students to “self-manage” their transitions successfully.

Some approaches like this are called “holistic”, referring to their emphasis on meeting the needs of the “whole” person. They typically involve enlarging the “learning space”, which is the focus or stimulus of the learning experience, the location in which it occurs, and sometimes the resources it requires. Such experiences may involve more than one facilitator, across a number of sites over an extended period of time. These approaches, increasingly being adopted in schools, support strongly the emphasis in School to Work on using experiences and resources in the local community.

Because holistic approaches typically reach across the common structures of KLA-based timetabling and room allocation, they can invariably require flexibility within schools and teacher practice. Evidence described above indicates how School to Work has increased schools’ flexibility around whole school planning and inter-KLA conversations and collaboration.

A number of thematic approaches to curriculum are identifiable in the data. In many instances, these take a focus task and develop a holistic approach incorporating a number of KLAs around a practical experience. For instance, examples cited included managing a citrus grove, designing and constructing a large Thai water jar, and producing artwork supporting and about a major local Show.

“Schools are focussing on aspects [that add greater relevance to] subject content”
– School or regional representative

“[We introduced] compulsory Community Service in Year 9”
– Careers Adviser

“[School to Work] break[s] down the idea that everyone has to be in classroom at the same time”
– School or regional representative

The Evaluation data shows many students are learning a range of specific employability skills, at frequent points in their learning, through a range of KLAs. As well, there is value in extended learning experiences, so students can recognise how the employability skills are interrelated.

“A highlight of School to Work … was participating in Community Service as it provided me with job skills and other related skills such as punctuality, group work, reliability and responsibility”
– Student

The Program has also been a major driver to link schools with TAFEs, raising students’ awareness of pathways involving TAFE, and also giving them experiences of TAFE, such as “TAFE Tasters” or regular learning experiences at TAFE colleges.
Linkages to other NSW DET initiatives and priorities

The evidence shows that the School to Work Program has been instrumental in encouraging the adoption of a whole school approach and team-based implementation strategies. This can be seen in how people planning School to Work give consideration to aligning or integrating it with other programs that meet the needs of the students.

The evidence indicates a wide range of other such programs with which School to Work is linked or integrated, including:

- **middle schooling**: approaches were reported that are sustaining or recapturing the engagement of students in Years 5 - 9
- **quality teaching**: many participants identified that the School to Work Program often involves pedagogies that engage students in learning experiences with high standards of relevance and authenticity
- **welfare programs**: interventions and programs defending and supporting the well-being of individuals and groups of students
- **leadership**: giving students opportunities to develop special skills. These students were then required to teach those skills to younger students and in some cases to present oral reports about the project to groups of teachers and to the community. This document includes two case studies of this, a barista initiative and welding a decorative fence
- **boys’ and girls’ education**: an example was given of a program in which less engaged (male) students attend work experience one day per week, changing workplaces every five weeks until they find the one about which they are very enthusiastic. Many of these students are now achieving post-school employment, apprenticeships or traineeships arising from these work placements.
- **gifted and talented students programs**: recognising that gifted and talented students are at risk of making unwise transitions based on poor information or guidance; such programs tailored School to Work experiences to these students’ specific needs
- **learning support**: individual coaching arrangements within schools were a useful vehicle for transition-related conversations with students.
Case Study: Owning Our School

Mulwaree High School

“Our innovative program allows our students to be physical. Red hot steel drawing the anger out of a student and channelling it into the foot of a bird, a roaring grinder chewing off the rough edges to leave a shining wing or a thousand welds to make the decorative fence.”

Students who find it hard fitting into normal school routine use the school’s metalwork workshop to design and create dynamics and beautiful metal and mosaic sculptures. On a Thursday you can have a guided tour of the 70+ artworks adorning the school. One year, they created a decorative fence, which they then donated to Crescent, a local SSP School.

The program has given these students new skills, values and a reason to come to school. After a year in the welding bay, the experienced students mentor the newcomers. Their attitude to their education has changed, and they have something they can return to see one day with their own children. Local businesses provided the materials free or at discounts.

“These students are creating not just works of art, but a reason for being at school.”

Case Study: Looking Forward

Year 10 Learning and Welfare (LAW) Program
Callaghan College, Waratah Technology Campus

“Imagine this…You have to find a container in which to place the knowledge and skills you have accumulated over 4 years at high school…”

The students have a period each week in small groups where all teachers participate. Using hard-copy, CD or the school’s shared drive, they prepare for life after Year 10 and high school. They work on their Logbook, Year 10 Tracking Sheet and Action Plan. The teachers meet every third week.

At the end, they submit their portfolios and resume, with identified Classroom Employment Related Skills (CERS) they have acquired through their school tasks, plus a portfolio in ‘their backpacks’ for moving forward in life. They each make a structured 30 minute oral presentation to a panel consisting of a teacher, a Year 9 student and an invited guest from the community, about the CERS they have mastered and their relevance to their future. This is included in each student’s school report.

“Looking Forward: It’s

■ a state of mind, anticipating and looking forward to the next stage
■ the action of planning my future, using the valuable knowledge and skills I have accumulated in my ‘backpack’ through my life.”
5.5 School Practice

School to Work encourages teachers to be more active and explicit in teaching students to be self-managers of their career and transition pathways. As well, it promotes exploring new approaches in the use of specialists and other teachers to best meet the transition needs of students.

Where School to Work has successfully been embraced, there is evidence that it has been an effective process in supporting changes in practice at the school level. The previous section described changes that occurred in school planning; this section describes changes in teacher practice.

Many of these changes in practice are driven by the school planning described above, and many arise independently of any such planning (such as the decision of a teacher to draw attention to how a particular set of mathematical skills would be relevant to a draughtsperson).

The Evaluation data shows significant innovations such as more flexible learning, a broadening of the learning space and greater cross-KLA collaboration.

5.5.1 Students planning transition pathways

A key priority of the School to Work Program is to assist students in developing their confidence as they manage their own career and transition planning.

In the 2005 Annual Report, schools identified that a career and transition plan has been documented by 85 per cent of all Year 10 students leaving school and 80 per cent of all Year 11 students leaving school, a very sound achievement.13

“[School to Work has given students] confidence to evaluate where they need to go in regard to developing the skills required for their future”
– School representative

The evidence strongly identifies that the School to Work Program makes it possible for students to engage more fully with a wide range of voices and experiences as they think about the future.

5.5.2 Students exploring career futures

The School to Work Program places great emphasis on helping students collect and interpret information about their work, education and training options by providing them with access to people, opportunities and information sources via a variety of media.

The data shows convincingly that School to Work is helping many students develop clearer and more accurate understandings of the features and requirements of different work options.

In the 2005 Annual Report, schools identified that around 80 per cent of all students in Years 10, 11 and 12 access electronic sources of career information. The two main sources of this information are the MyFuture website (over 400 schools) and Jobsearch (over 300 schools).
Many schools use more than one source. While there is evidence that Career Advisers and other teachers are developing their own confidence in using these electronic sources, career and transition information is being distributed to students via many channels, including the library / Independent Learning Centre, newsletters, careers resource centre and noticeboards.14

“I realised I don’t want to be a chef - the hours are too long”
– Student

“In careers lessons I learnt that if you’re an out-there sort of person you don’t want to be sitting at a bench”
– Student

Evidence shows that the Program has helped students identify work opportunities of which they had previously been unaware. Furthermore, it helped them to make some preliminary choices, and focus on the requirements for achieving those choices.

Talking about MyFuture website: “I’ve expanded the number of my ‘dream jobs’ from 3 to about 7”
– Student A

“For me, it’s the opposite. It’s helped me to narrow it down, especially with my work experience, so I can focus on what I need to do to get into that.” – Student B

Career exploration has been greatly enhanced in many schools as a consequence of the Program.

5.5.3 Strengthening student outcomes through vocational learning

Another key priority of the School to Work Program is in helping teachers to identify and provide a range of opportunities in all curriculum areas for students to make explicit links to vocational and enterprise learning.

A major achievement of the School to Work Program has been the integration of employability skills into teaching and learning. This has involved significant changes to teacher thinking and practice, and a very strong message from the data is that where School to Work has been embraced, this integration is occurring.

In the 2005 Annual Report, schools identified that 64 per cent of students had significant skills in exploring career futures. Almost 77 per cent of schools believed that students had very good access to workplace learning programs that complemented the students’ personal career development plans.15

“There is a greater awareness of the transition from school to work by teachers particularly. Teachers are becoming conscious of the need to discuss careers relating to their subject area.”
– School or regional representative

“School to Work gives teachers a way of answering the eternal question from students: ‘Why are we doing this?’”
– School or regional representative

“When [students] ask me, ‘Why are we doing this?’ I point to the employability skill posters I have up around the walls”. I say THAT’s why we’re doing this.” – Teacher

Where School to Work has been well planned and implemented, the Program is often associated with significant changes at the classroom level.

Many of the participants in this Evaluation reported how teachers are using events and experiences from outside their classroom to illustrate links to employability skills. Many examples were provided of where teachers are explicitly incorporating employability skills into units of work. This includes, for example, having students work on Logbook pages across curriculum areas.

“In History, [students] studied the history of a site – [which is] now a trucking company, used to be an abattoir. [This activity] linked the syllabus outcomes to school plans and School to Work; involved middle school, industry support, enterprise [learning] – an example of quality teaching”
– School or regional representative

In best practice situations, School to Work is promoted as a way to achieve more relevant and engaging approaches to learning. The evidence reveals:

- constructivist learning
- increased engagement of students
- greater links to the community
- the application of learning in the real world
- encouraging abstraction from student experiences
- demonstrating the transferability of skills.

The Evaluation supports the argument that students are more engaged when they can see the relevance of what they are doing at school as part of the world beyond school.

“[School to Work encourages] risk taking – new approaches – integrated program leads to ability to work creatively with other KLA staff”
– School or regional representative

“Teachers [now] have a better understanding of exit outcomes needed for students entering the world of work. [They have come to see that the] purpose of education [is meeting] student needs”
– School or regional representative

“(School to Work made) within-school language match better with workplace language”
– School or regional representative

“The School to Work Program [has] given structure and importance to the whole school”
– School or regional representative

The achievement of such practices has required significant shifts in teacher’s skills and perceptions. The evidence from the Evaluation underlines the central importance of professional learning, and involving a wider dialogue amongst teachers around classroom practice. This theme is explored further in the next chapter.

Enterprise learning

Enterprise learning is defined by Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) to be: “learning directed towards developing in young people those skills, competencies, understandings and attributes which equip them to be innovative, and to identify, create, initiate, and successfully manage personal, community, business and work opportunities, including working for themselves.”
It provides students opportunities for:

- student ownership
- experiential learning
- cooperative learning
- reflective practice

A number of participants identified the role of enterprising skills in School to Work. They identified that these skills place a greater emphasis on creativity, identifying problems and finding solutions (compared with employability skills). It was commented that they build persistence, resilience, self-confidence and self-esteem. Some participants said that they conceive of enterprising skills as a vehicle for developing employability skills, because they’re on-going. All participants who mentioned employability skills valued them for their relevance and authenticity.

There was some divergence of opinion on how applicable enterprising skills are across all the different KLAs. Some argued that students’ enterprising skills are most easily taught in business studies/HSIE or technology subjects, while others asserted that all KLAs can contribute to developing employability skills, because they’re on-going. All participants who mentioned employability skills valued them for their relevance and authenticity.

Some participants reported that through the Program, their careers education program has developed particularly strong links to the community, businesses and parents. The evidence also indicates that there is substantial opportunity for this to be expanded.

Revitalised Career Education

One of the four Priority Areas for School to Work is “exploring career futures”. For students to be able to plan successful transitions, they should have access to information about their options for work, and further education and training. This information could be provided by people, experiences and a range of media, most notably the internet.

The 2005 Annual Report data indicates that most Year 9 – 12 students accessed individualised career counselling (almost 80 per cent in Year 10 and 90 per cent in Year 12), and that a considerable number even access external counsellors (nearly 40 per cent in Year 12).

“While the data demonstrates the importance of young people being able to access both internal and external counselling support, they underline the accessibility of school-based counselling and the critical role that careers advisers and others have in directly supporting students in New South Wales government schools in career-related matters. At the same time, wider evidence suggests that access to broader career counselling services is becoming more prominent. This growth reflects, in part at least, the increasing sophistication of practice around career planning.”

Some participants reported that through the Program, their careers education program has developed particularly strong links to the community, businesses and parents. The evidence also indicates that there is substantial opportunity for this to be expanded.

Individualised learning experiences

*School to Work* aims to provide strategies and support which may vary depending on the needs of particular students. Acknowledging and valuing the diversity amongst our young people, *School to Work* does not encourage a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Learning experiences which are tailored to an individual’s needs, or which respond most vigorously to the individual’s needs are referred to in this Evaluation as “individualised”.

The data indicates a number of such experiences which have occurred under the auspices of *School to Work*. A number of cross-curricular programs gave extensive opportunity to engage students individually in mentoring-type relationships. Such individual attention gives great scope for the development of trusting student-teacher relationships, with the potential for increased student self-esteem and engagement.

“One of the reasons [that] parts of the Program work so well is because it strikes the students on a more personal level – the parts deal with everyone individually with no-one achieving the same results”
– School or regional representative

Some schools reported that they have engaged the whole of a cohort (usually Year 10) in individualised interviews, one-on-one, usually involving staff from across a range of KLAs, and sometimes with the participation of employers or community mentors. In preparation for these experiences, the interviewers were trained in eliciting answers and holding an individualised coaching conversation.

The purpose of such sessions varied. They always included a focus on the employability skills that the student had developed and the evidence they had collected to demonstrate that they often related to subject selection for Years 11 and 12 studies. Some replicated a job interview, to give the student experience in the dynamics of those situations, and to give a practical demonstration of personal presentation and deportment. In one case, teachers, sitting with the students individually, integrated employability skills into the students’ school references.

“Because there has been money earmarked for *School to Work*, students are more able to get individualised attention [and] advice”
– School or regional representative

“The mock interview we had with a teacher showed me what an interview would be like - it was great - I had to bring my log book and we went through it.”
– Student

Individualising the learning experiences provided rich opportunities to support students in their individual transition planning.

Targeted learning experiences

*School to Work* is designed to meet the transition needs of all students, while allowing that some groups of students have specific needs. The previous section described ways in which *School to Work* has responded at the individual level, through individualised learning experiences. This section will describe examples of learning experiences which were designed to meet the particular needs that were held in common by a recognisable group of students.
"We developed a program for students who may not think they are suited to Uni, to give them confidence – breaking stereotypes”

– School representative

Thematic curriculum approaches used by schools have supported a range of students who have become disengaged from school. A common theme in these programs is the building of the self-esteem of students who are perceived (by themselves and others) as being unskilled or ‘difficult’ or disconnected from learning. The examples in the evidence indicate that School to Work has been effective in achieving positive outcomes for such students.

With regard to “equity groups”, the 2005 Annual Report indicates that:

- “the largest proportional representation for Indigenous students was in Year 9 (almost five per cent). This decreased by almost one per cent to approximately four per cent in Year 10 and by a further approximately one per cent in Year 11 (almost three per cent). In Year 12, the Indigenous representation was just over two per cent. Indigenous students’ participation was broadly consistent with the relative enrolment data.

- students with a disability are participating in a sustained way in the School to Work Program. It should be noted that between Year 9 and Year 12 there is only a 0.65 per cent variation in their participation relative to the whole cohort. Such data suggests that the School to Work Program is being provided in an inclusive way for students with disabilities.

- between approximately a quarter and a third of students participating in the School to Work Program, depending on the particular Year, come from a language other than English background. This data mirrors State enrolment data generally and point to the success of the Program in providing access for students from this equity group.

The wider evidence suggests that a substantial number of schools have strong equity components in their School to Work planning. These include: individual case management, job coaching, family liaison, mentoring in work experience and work placement programs and, the allocation of initial teacher aide time that is then, on a case-by-case basis, gradually withdrawn. This also includes effort associated with students at risk of not completing their schooling. Amongst the strategies employed for these students were ‘TAFE taster’ Programs, electronic assessment …, and mentoring.”

Explicit examples were reported during the Evaluation of students who had been disengaged or unable to identify their employability skills, and who had a significant realisation, or whose attitude had been turned around.

**Access assured for all students**

School to Work is designed to meet the transition needs of all students. While some groups are identified as having particular needs (see the previous section), School to Work aims to support students of every background, ability and level of engagement. The Program does not aim to service only those students who are disengaged or who exhibit behavioural difficulties.
"I’ve been doing some reading lately on gifted and talented students and underachievement. The comments suggest that by supporting students to relate their studies to real life learning, that underachievement can be turned around. The Quality Teaching Framework was mentioned at our meeting. One of the elements in that framework is ‘significance’, that is, the relationship of studies to the real world.” – Regional representative

A focus of discussion for many participants was that School to Work needs to be conceptualised more broadly across participating schools as a Program for all students. Because School to Work is so successful as an approach for engaging students who are perceived as “at risk”, there can be a perception that these students may set its parameters. Some respondents to the Evaluation asserted that School to Work needs to be more strongly linked with enabling academically capable and engaged students to experience successful transitions. There was strong appreciation of the place of the Program as one that shows the ways in which all students can have grounded experiences which extend classroom learning, rather than being an alternative to an academic or mainstream curriculum.

**Engaging with students before Year 9**

The majority of participants in the Evaluation focussed on School to Work activities around the peak participation which happens in Years 9 and 10.

“If you haven’t got [School to Work, students’ thinking about transitions] right by Year 10, you’ve lost the plot” – Careers Adviser

In the course of discussion, participants expressed significant insights about the value of investing earlier in a young person’s development. While this is not a direction that appears to have been widely canvassed previously by those participating in the focus groups, when it was raised by one or two individuals in a focus group, it resonated for others. When prompted, people recognised the value of investing earlier in a young person’s development.

**Recording and reporting individual student outcomes**

Some participants reported that their school has been developing a method for recording the students’ individual employability skills and reporting those skills to parents in the student reports and in some cases in each student’s school reference.

A number of participants said they value very highly having students engage in conversations about their employability skills and the evidence they have to demonstrate those. In some schools, students have those conversations firstly with their teachers, either face-to-face or through the collection of a portfolio of works and/or Logbook pages. The employability skills are then articulated in student reports. A few participants reported that their students have then discussed these with their parents, and even taken them to job interviews with potential employers.

“[We developed an] authentic assessment Program – identified units of work or assessment tasks across all KLAs highlighting employment related skills” – Careers Adviser

Some Regional consultants and others with an interest in the strategic issues surrounding the Program, expressed interest in having the transitions tracked that students make from school. They said it would be useful to have client satisfaction and/or post-school destination data.
Increased student self-confidence

The Vision of the School to Work Program identifies the need for students to build the skills and confidence to become independent, self-aware, resourceful and critically alert to their transition choices and opportunities.

In the 2005 Annual Report, 64 per cent of schools indicated that either all or most students did have the confidence to access career support services and to manage their transition from school.

The Evaluation evidence supports these quantitative data, through evidence that School to Work builds students’ awareness of their existing employability skills, and by explicitly developing them further. Furthermore, some participants linked students’ increased self-confidence with their increased engagement in their learning. A few participants referred to how this was influencing students’ whole lives significantly for the better.

“[Some students show] increased self esteem and confidence in all areas - school/learning - vocational - social - they will now ask employers about part time/ holiday work and the prospect of apprenticeships”
– School representative

“[Employability] skills are identified by students. They are able to articulate what they can do and give demonstrated examples” – School or regional representative

“A success of the program has been building students’ confidence - student achieving a job using resume resources in student package”
– School or regional representative

“It’s given them] confidence to move outside their own world” – School or regional representative

“[School to Work] gave my son confidence that he could apply for a job” – Parent

Case study: Barista initiative

Crestwood High School

A local Barista employer comes to the school weekly and trains a group of students in making good quality coffee. By taking and delivering orders for coffee from the teachers, the students become more confident and build better relationships with the teachers and become more confident relating to adults.

The students identify specific employment skills they are learning. They also make presentations to other schools about the Program, increasing their self-confidence and presentation skills.
The online Student Pathways Survey is a resource that helps students consider their school to work experiences. By explicitly asking students to reflect on these, the Survey has the potential to contribute to greater self-awareness and improved self-confidence. It received a number of mentions during data collection. Furthermore, attention was drawn to how the follow-up session with students after the survey has the potential to be very valuable, with appropriate counselling strategies and ways of engaging students in further conversation around the results.

**Increased student retention and engagement**

*School to Work* is designed to encourage students to recognise the skills and capacities they will need to achieve their chosen transitions. In many cases, this will involve continuing secondary schooling, rather than leaving school prematurely (whether voluntarily or not). It certainly involves the student being “engaged”, maintaining a level of interest and application which will help maximise the benefits they are receiving from their continued participation in learning at school.

The evidence indicates that *School to Work* has contributed to higher student retention and engagement. This is most noticeable where these features had previously been poor, and where there were high levels of suspension.

“More students are staying on – retention [is] improving”
– School representative

“No suspensions – retention of [an] ‘at risk’ student to the end of Year 10 – successful completion of School Certificate” – School representative

“Greater engagement of students including retention”
– School representative

“Improved retention of students Years 10-11”
– School representative

“Students engaged in School to Work leads to work experience, leads to focus for apprenticeships and [then they] want to get [the School Certificate] for this”
– School or regional representative

“[In one school] 20-30 per cent students are indigenous - higher retention into Years 7 & 8 by sharing some ownership of the school- local media are on LCP or local government initiatives - promotion and marketing”
– School or regional representative

“Benefits - increased engagement, attendance, retention and successful completion of School Certificate with much better than expected results - no suspensions - engagement in relevant/accessable curriculum”
– School or regional representative

In these situations, *School to Work* is being used to anticipate some student problems before they arise. Participants indicated that *School to Work* is actively and consciously being used as a strategy for promoting retention and engagement, especially where these issues are acute. For example, one school program (called “Owning Our School”) introduces attitudes to work to students early in Year 7 who are disengaged, highlighting school’s relevance to their lives and addressing their reasons for not engaging. As one participant observed, the Program encourages students to forge honest relationships with teachers.

**5.6 Regional Planning**

The evidence indicates that great importance attaches to leadership at the Regional level. The Region’s own planning is critical, and provides the essential underpinnings for effective *School to Work* learning experiences.
5.6.1 Regional School to Work teams and support officers

Highly effective regional planning has occurred through multi-stakeholder School to Work coordinating teams. Some Regional School to Work teams comprise up to eight people across a range of roles (Principals, Deputy Principals, Career Advisers and teachers) and from a number of schools (various socio-economic areas, SSPs). Establishing such teams typically involves:

- identifying a range of roles which would contribute usefully to a Regional School to Work coordinating team (this could include employers, parents…)
- identifying and inviting suitable individuals who have those roles to join the Regional School to Work coordinating team

Regions employed one or more (4 in one Region!) School to Work support officers, who developed close relationships with staff in schools (Executive, Careers Advisers, and teachers). They went to schools as a peer to provide practical ideas, credible advice and timely support. School to Work support officers were passionate and committed, well-informed and practical. They were able to listen well, and provide a supportive ‘ear’.

Most importantly, they:

- helped schools to embrace and extend their understanding of School to Work
- encouraged and prompted schools to engage in School to Work
- encouraged good practice amongst schools, by helping them become clear about the aims of School to Work and prompting them to develop programs to achieve those aims.

Some of the effective practices employed by regions were:

- a systematic process for contacting and following up with schools, even where a school had not been actively involved in School to Work, so that it was hard for schools to ignore School to Work or fall behind
- running workshops to help schools understand their School to Work funding guidelines and how to write a ‘winning’ application.
6.0 Findings: Professional Learning

The document: *School to Work – Creating Future Pathways* draws attention to the need for professional development, emphasising its importance in achieving the changes in planning and practice.¹⁹

The Evaluation data indicates that there has been a range of formal and informal professional learning activities to assist in the effective delivery of vocational learning. Many school-based participants indicated that they are aware of the linkages between vocational learning and the NSW Quality Teaching Model. They typically observed that they had come to perceive the Program as enabling them to implement that framework at a high level of effectiveness.

Most obviously, professional learning is essential for teachers and school senior executive implementing the planning and practices identified in the previous chapter. This chapter describes significant achievements in professional development, and demonstrates the continuing importance of investment in professional learning for teachers, formally, informally and through professional networks.

6.1 Professional development workshops and sessions

The Evaluation data contains frequent references to the value of professional development workshops and sessions in engaging successfully with School to Work. These were seen as central drivers in supporting teachers’ efforts, building their skills and confidence.

“Effective professional learning has resulted in greater understanding of staff in regard to role of pedagogy in School to Work”
– School or regional representative

“[It would be valuable to have] further capacity building of School to Work leaders and teachers through continued Regional/State funding and professional learning opportunities “– School or regional representative

In the 2005 Annual Report, schools reported significant participation in School to Work professional development activities:

- more than 3,300 teachers participated in such professional development relating to vocational learning. These teachers are distributed across all the curriculum areas, and especially high representation (1011 teachers) occurs in the Technological and Applied Studies KLA.
- Careers Advisers and other career support staff from 444 schools attended professional networks organised locally, 404 organised Regionally and 243 organised at the state level.
- 297 schools implemented school-based professional development to support the workplace learning policy and guidelines as part of their strategies for implementing workplace policy and learning. As well, 360 schools were represented in Regional training, indicating the considerable effort that the Directorate and Regions have invested in this mandatory policy.
- to support the release of the 2005 edition of the Vocational Learning Booklets in each KLA, many Regions implemented professional development activities targeting head teachers and classroom teachers with others planning such activities for 2006.
- the wider evidence indicates that Careers Advisers and teachers have participated with considerable success in professional development for specific programs and tools such as the ‘Real Game’ series.

The Annual Report also indicates that “the wider evidence suggests that the professional development offered to teachers in vocational learning was very well received.”
Teachers were positive about the relevance of professional learning to their subject areas and about the opportunities to gain understandings of how they could contribute to ensuring teaching programs supported students’ career planning.

The vocational learning booklets in the KLAs are strongly supported in the wider evidence, including their “success” in professional development activities. Focussing on the professional development of head teachers appears to have been especially important around them. Regional reports indicate that effort in this regard was a highlight of much of the work undertaken in 2005.\(^{20}\)

### 6.2 Formal school-based professional learning

The evidence contains frequent references to professional learning under the auspices of School to Work developed and delivered within the participants’ own schools, indicating the value attached to it by the recipients. In particular, a number of innovative features were cited during the Evaluation, including:

- for the first time, professional development days delivered by Careers Advisers to KLA teachers
- cross-KLA development days to help teachers write programs which included transition-support learning experiences
- cross-KLA development sessions to help teachers apply successfully for funding, raising awareness of the Region’s School to Work funding guidelines
- cross-KLA building of interpersonal skills such as interviewing, counselling and mentoring.

“Careers advisers are interacting with other staff members in a way that has never happened before eg leading professional development days”
– School or regional representative

“A team of teachers from all the KLAs receiving professional learning to conduct 1 on 1, 50 minute interviews to support Year 10 students - subject selection, transition planning, whole child focus - led to change of culture among teachers - very excited”
– Careers Adviser

“Professional development [run] by [Career Advisers] for KLA teachers [on] how to plan School to Work into their Program”
– School or regional representative

A significant achievement of the Program is the formal professional development that has been occurring to support it.

### 6.3 Informal school-based professional learning

The evidence indicates that a great deal of powerful learning occurs during the planning of School to Work initiatives, and in the implementation of new strategies and pedagogical approaches the Program is encouraging. Participants frequently described learnings they had achieved by planning, doing and reviewing.

“Teachers come together to learn and plan delivery of vocational learning outcomes on planning days and in professional learning teams.”
– School or regional representative

The evidence indicates the value that staff derive incidentally from conversations and collaborations within their school, as they develop whole school or cross-KLA plans and initiatives.

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19 Op. cit..
“Teachers are not clear ‘how’ to do it - scared, so School to Work’s structure, provides something to build people’s confidence” – Regional representative

“Sitting here in this focus group has made me think ‘Ah well! This is what its all about!!’” – Teacher

The Program has engaged teachers in a range of activities in their professional endeavours which incidentally provide good opportunities for practising and modelling their own enterprising skills.

6.4 Professional networks

Professional networks have an important role in supporting successful School to Work by connecting people with similar roles, interests and needs. They enable the discussion of issues, the sharing of ideas and the building of enthusiasm.

Evidence in the 2005 Annual Report indicates that Careers Advisers in particular participate actively in networks. Reference was made to the profile of the activities, with guest speakers invited as part of community relationships and annual careers expos. One Region indicated it has about “three very active careers adviser networks that meet for professional development activities each term.”

Some respondents in the Evaluation indicated that networks are most convenient when they are within local areas, thus avoiding the cost and time associated with travel. As well, it more likely that the needs of schools located at some distance will be different because they are servicing quite different communities.

21 Op. cit..
7.0 Findings: Building Connections and Networks

One of the four priority areas of School to Work is “Building Connections and Networks”. This area was described in School to Work: Creating Future Pathways 2005 – 2007 as “strengthening career, community and workplace learning opportunities for students through strategic connections, partnerships and networks.” This same document elaborated that this would include developing new or building on existing local partnerships with business and industry and would connect students, teachers, parents and schools with local organisations and support agencies.

There is significant evidence that where these connections and networks have been established they have been extremely beneficial in supporting students in their career development and contextual learning. Many respondents commented on both the need to develop these connections and networks further and some of the difficulties of doing so.

For a relationship to engage the participants, it needs to be valuable to both parties. A common theme in this chapter is the importance of developing and sharing strategies for communicating the benefits of partnering to the parties involved. The Program has enjoyed considerable success in this regard, and evidence points to its increasing capacity to achieve important outcomes in the area.

7.1 Parents

From within the School to Work Program, there is a widespread realisation that parents have a strong influence on students’ perceptions of themselves and their employment prospects and available pathways. Many involved in the Program readily acknowledge that parents are a key source of career information (though sometimes of variable quality).

The evidence includes a number of successful efforts at partnering with parents, including:

- a specific program run by a community agency, engaging parents as career transition support
- students and parents attending a ‘hypothetical’ style forum to share knowledge and information re career pathways and local employment and training opportunities
- subject selection evenings and parent-directed career information sessions with employers, with multi-lingual groups supported by translators
- interviews of students and parents with the Careers Adviser for post secondary planning and linking with outside advisers (eg TAFE Head Teachers, employment agencies) through conference phone links.

The Evaluation data strongly indicates that the Program has great potential to strengthen the involvement of parents in supporting student transitions through the School to Work Program. The area, however, remains challenging and this is widely acknowledged.

The evidence indicates that parents typically value the opportunity to have input to the career decisions of their children. There are some structural difficulties relating to perceived levels of busyness in parents’ lives, and the mismatch between when teachers are at school and when parents are available.
7.2 Employers

Some schools indicated a long involvement with employers, through careers markets, workplace tours, work experience and the work placement component for VET courses. The evidence also includes some further models of powerful engagement of employers, through:

- mentoring programs
- employer participation in “hypothetical” style career evenings
- employer involvement in mock interviews
- scholarships schemes and traineeships
- “try a trade” days
- “non-traditional days” such as “Tech Girl” days, encouraging girls into IT.

Schools are starting to make use of resources which support employers, such as industry groups, employer associations and the Local Community Partnerships (LCPs).

The data indicates that many teachers and employers place a very high value on the Program, and are willing to find time to engage with it. Developing and sharing strategies for communicating the benefits of partnering with employers, industry groups, employer associations and schools offers a future focus for School to Work.

7.3 School to Work and Local Community Partnerships

Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) are independent organisations funded principally by the Australian Government via the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). In 2006 the thirty-five providers in New South Wales receive over $12 million from DEST.

The LCPs currently deliver three main programs: Structured Workplace Learning; Career and Transition Support, and Adopt a School. School to Work is most closely aligned with the Career and Transition Support area.

LCPs are the major brokering agencies, with explicit responsibilities under their Career and Transition Support agenda to form strong connections between industry, business and the training sector. The LCPs are an important resource on which schools can draw to further their aims under School to Work.

The Evaluation data indicates that some strong relationships are starting to form between schools and LCPs. For example, one LCP helped parents develop better links with industry by running industry tours for parents and students. With some success; it ran a metals and engineering industry talk to Arabic-speaking mothers, with a translator. There is now a full Year 11 class, whereas previously it appeared likely that the subject might not be viable at the school.

“What we need here most crucially is more participation of businesses, government and organisations of all kinds in providing workplace learning opportunities, especially work experience and work placement, for students. One clear role for LCP’s would be to expand and help to coordinate these opportunities ... ‘Corporate responsibility’ should include the provision of workplace learning experiences for students.”

– Regional representative

Local Community Partnerships are a key resource for schools in their efforts to build strong partnerships with employers.

7.4 Mentoring

Mentoring is most commonly interpreted as an extended one-to-one relationship between people with quite different levels of experience or skills, for the purpose of assisting the less-experienced person. From the
Evaluation evidence, it is clear that one of the significant achievements of the School to Work Program is the fact that, for many students, it prepares them for their entry into a wider, adult world, with adult standards. The wider Evaluation evidence indicates that effective mentoring can be an important component of how students connect with this world under the auspices of the Program.

When mentoring was mentioned by participants, it was regarded as being extremely valuable. Mentoring relationships can be discerned in many of the interactions described in the data collected in this Evaluation. For example, the evidence includes examples of some teacher-student relationships that have strong mentoring elements: when a Deputy Principal identified a particular group of students at risk of disengaging from school, and worked with them one day a week, learning and using particular employment-related skills, they had ample opportunity to discuss life and work and the world beyond the students’ previous experience.

The data points to a broader concept of mentoring, emphasising the quality and focus of the engagement, through a wide range of models of how it can occur. For example, in the case described in the previous paragraph, the mentoring relationship was not one-to-one. It need not be face-to-face, either, as it could occur by phone or email without the parties ever meeting.

The data indicates that students have benefited from having a mentor who is not part of the school, someone other than a teacher. School to Work has encouraged some schools to develop mentoring with members of the community who are neither parents nor employers, and often including strategies for preparing these people to act as a mentor. It was emphasised that mentors should be trained in the terms and concepts of School to Work and be aware of the details of the Programs that have been written.

“My [parent/community] mentor helped me think through what I want to do afterwards” - Student

“My mentor and I sat down and figured out what I would like to do after school” - Student

The data shows that School to Work strengthens community connectedness and brings benefits to all parties – students, families, schools, teachers, employers, and mentors. The evidence suggest that to encourage potential mentors to become involved, those setting up mentoring arrangements should be aware that the mentor is getting benefits also, and be able to articulate and promote those benefits.

7.5 Community service and service learning

School to Work is designed to engage students; the data includes many examples where students contributed to the community through community service and service learning.

“The Program is linked to the service learning program that has been developed, [which] is voluntary for students” – School representative

“Use of authentic learning - engagement of students through workplace learning - employers need to engage kids in meaningful participation in the business/community. This is replacing what service groups and community groups used to provide - gets kids to focus on more than just themselves” – School representative

The evidence shows how much students who are participating in effective School to Work activities are more connected to their communities and therefore are better placed to make informed transition and career decisions. Quotes such as the following endorse the effectiveness of School to Work at the student level:
“A highlight of [my] School to Work planning was participating in Community Service as it provided me with job skills and other related skills such as punctuality, group work, reliability and responsibility” - Student

“School to Work makes me think – [I developed] bridging skills for work from community service skills” - Student

Both the Board of Studies and the NSW Department of Education and Training are currently addressing how students can be more fully engaged in community-based learning. School to Work represents a major flagship in this area and constitutes a significant reservoir of understanding about effective approaches and practices.
8.0 Findings: School to Work Resources

There are many resources that support School to Work: financial, professional expertise, specific programs and projects, paper and electronic information and curriculum documents from a range of sources. Resources include those provided through the Vocational Education in Schools Directorate, employers, parents, community, and the information that students gather and share with each other, especially through access to online sites.

This chapter focuses on particularly significant examples of these financial and curriculum resources provided by and through the Vocational Education in Schools Directorate.

8.1 The Employment Related Skills Logbook

The purpose of the Employment Related Skills Logbook (the “Logbook”) is to distil into one place a range of information to assist students’ transitions. It provides a focus for students’ awareness of their employability skills, and a tool for organising evidence of those skills.

The Logbook is widely used across schools and is seen by the overwhelming majority as a valuable tool within the School to Work Program. The Annual Report (2005) indicates that:

- significant numbers of students use the Logbook, for a range of reasons:
  - career planning: approximately 116,600 students, peaking at over 41,000 in Year 10
  - curriculum studies: approximately 57,500 students, peaking at over 24,000 in Year 10
  - resume: approximately 87,000 students, peaking at over 35,000 in Year 10
  - “Approximately two-thirds of schools have invested effort in informing parents about the purpose of the Logbook. At the same time, there is acknowledgement in the wider evidence that there is a continued need for effort around communication with parents.”
  - the primary usage is in Year 10, with significant up-take in Years 9 - 12

- some usage reported in Years 7 and 8 indicates that School to Work has increasing reach into these younger Years, but with potential for growth

- “some 5,687 classroom teachers (excluding careers advisers) explicitly used the Logbook as part of their teaching repertoire. Such a figure is highly encouraging, as is the broad ‘spread’ of usage across the curriculum, including quite diverse areas such as English and mathematics.”

Contributors to this Evaluation, who offered evidence about their use of the Logbook, identified their role as:

- Careers Adviser (45 per cent)
- KLA teacher (33 per cent)
- other (22 per cent), including parent, school senior executive, School to Work committee member

The extensive use of the Logbook by other than Careers Advisers supports the conclusion that vocational learning is occurring in a wide range of circumstances.

These contributors indicated that they used it with students:

- approximately once a term (23 per cent)
- during careers or School to Work lessons (23 per cent)
- at the end of a unit of work, or “periodically” (20 per cent)
- rarely (16 per cent).

This data is consistent with the Logbooks making repeated appearances in students’ school experience.

Many participants identified the value of the Logbook as a tool for organising information and for focussing the students’ thinking on their transition planning.

22 Op. cit..
“[The Logbook gives teachers a focus for their attention - prompts students to come back with questions” – School or regional representative

“Write work-related skills in each topic – record those skills, put an extra column in teaching program, write when you observe that happening, report on them, put them into Logbooks” – School representative

“[The Logbook helps me get organised” – Student

Significantly, the Logbook supports a central message of the Program: self-management, as is captured in the following comment:

“It is valuable and important that self responsibility was part of the message of Logbooks … and School to Work generally. In the current and future worlds of work, self responsibility is inescapable. The self-responsibility message includes awareness that a career is generally broader and more complex than something that starts when you leave school and get a full time job and ends when you retire.” – School or regional representative

By encouraging and supporting self-management, the Logbook assists students to reflect on their learning, to become aware of the employability skills that they have gained and to think about their careers.

“[The Logbook gives a] clear checklist of skills which a student may not have previously recognised” – School or regional representative

“The Logbook has helped students to identify and start working towards career paths and certain workplace skills” – School or regional representative

As well, it was used as a resource for other vocational learning activities. Students commented …

“After reading through [your Logbook] you gain ideas about how you would like to start your life in the workforce” – Student

“Using the Logbook really helped with mock interviews - dressing for interviews - resume writing” – Student

“I took my logbook along when I went to get a part time job and I got the job on the spot” – Student

Teachers and Career Advisers commented that the Logbook was an important tool to assist students in communicating their employability skills both to parents and to employers:

“[Logbooks are] formal documentation of what students are doing in a highly presentable format.” – Teacher or Career Adviser

“Documenting individual student experiences through Logbook, leads into vocational learning, resume, interviewing technique and preparation.” – Teacher or Career Adviser

Much of the discussion around the Logbook focussed on the requirement for easy access by:

- students when collecting, reviewing and using the personal information
- teachers when supporting students and reporting employability skills.

Operational issues to do with the storage of and access to the Logbook present a challenge for many schools. Most schools reported that they have addressed the challenge by storing the Logbooks in a central location, under the direct control of the Careers Adviser. One school proudly reported using its library’s accession system so that students could take charge of “borrowing” and “returning” the Logbook. Others thought this sounded too constraining on students, preferring to bring the Logbooks all on a trolley to the students, when required.
In order to increase the reach and impact of the Logbook, there was some discussion about providing the Logbook in an electronic form in the future. There was particular interest in an electronic format that would enable the updating of the record of employability skills. Some teachers also explored the possibility of being able to customise the Logbook in new ways, suggesting capacity such as the insertion of school logos and sections that addressed particular school and community contexts.

However, the evidence suggests some caution around having the whole Logbook in an on-line mode for storage, retrieval and presentation of personal data. It was noted that this is a big step, and consideration would need to be given to the significant privacy issues. Moreover, some participants felt that such a development may not match with current perceptions of how the Logbook’s information can most conveniently be presented to a potential employer. The diversity of needs in relation to the presentation of the Logbook is captured by the comments from two students attending the same focus group discussion:

“Kids don’t like big scary folders - let us personalise it” - Student A
“I don’t agree - it looks professional for the employer, easy to keep track of, be organised” – Student B

“While the Logbooks themselves may not have ...operated as it was intended, the basic message about the importance of learning and articulating transferable skills generally got through, I think.” – School or regional representative

There is a well-established role for the Logbook, and the diversity of needs uncovered in this Evaluation indicates the desirability of it being flexible to the circumstances of the students and schools.

8.2 The Key Learning Area (KLA) Vocational Learning booklets

A separate support booklet has been produced and distributed for each of the eight curriculum areas (such as English, Mathematics, etc). According to the evidence, these booklets are widely used and valued highly.

The 2005 Annual Report indicates that:

“The vocational learning booklets in the KLAs are strongly supported in the wider evidence, including their successes in professional development activities. Focusing on the professional development of head teachers appears to have been especially important. Regional reports indicate that effort in this regard was a highlight of much of the work undertaken in 2005.”

Participants in this Evaluation, who offered evidence about their use of the KLA booklets, indicated that they used it:

- “frequently” (40 per cent)
- when planning a unit of work (40 per cent)
- roughly once a term (10 per cent)
- “on an individual needs basis” (10 per cent)

The participants indicated that they found the booklets to be practical guides, valuable in assisting teachers to plan and implement School to Work.

8.3 The online Student Pathways Survey

The Student Pathways Survey originated as an opportunity for students to measure their sense of self-efficacy with respect to the intended outcomes of School to Work. It was initially intended that the survey data would be useful to schools in working with students individually and a way of informing schools in their planning of career programs and activities.

The Survey has been piloted in a limited number of Regions and is currently being introduced state wide. In 2005, 79 schools (in 3 Regions) reported that they had used the online Student Pathways Survey. This was a significant up-take, given that participants in the Evaluation noted that it is ‘embryonic’ and that it is essentially being trialled at this stage.

Participants indicated that its main use is as a career planning tool. In particular, it is available as a focus for transition-related conversations between the students, teachers and parents. It was suggested that the benefits from these conversations would be increased through professional development in counselling skills.

8.4 Funding

Participants frequently commented that the availability of funding was very significant in helping to establish and develop School to Work.

“Funding has helped implement School to Work”
– School or regional representative

“Knowing ahead that there is long-term funding (3-5 Years) – allows people to plan, and be interested in doing it. The Region is prepared to put it into their strategic plan, helps get the attention of school senior executive”
– School or regional representative

“Surety of funding ensures the capacity to sustain and grow School to Work”
– School or regional representative

In particular, participants highlighted the contribution of funding to professional learning.

“Where you take the school is very much in the hands of the Deputies and Principal. Funds really help - can link to professional learning”
– School or regional representative

“Further capacity building of School to Work leaders and teachers through continued Regional/state funding and professional learning opportunities”
– School or regional representative

“Funding for School to Work to allow staff to attend in-services/perform School to Work organisation”
– School or regional representative

“Provision of funding to release teacher to spend time in a workplace”
– School or regional representative

Participants also reported ways in which funds could be used flexibly to meet the particular needs of students. Examples included enabling students to attend events external to school such as industry visits, expos, universities, and marine days. For students in remote areas, significant funding enabled remote schools to implement relevant School to Work events and to provide the accommodation and transport needed to support visits to universities in major cities.

Participants drew attention to how School to Work provides a level of sustainability. Even relatively small funding amounts available at the school level have had a significant impact, leading them to:
invest time in writing or adapting programs which help achieve the aims of School to Work (using the KLA booklets described below or programs developed elsewhere)

access resources and tools (such as The Real Game or the MyFuture web-site) which they had previously considered too difficult or time-consuming to access

better understand the Program’s aims and guidelines. Ideally, the act of applying for the funding can lead to a deepening in applicants’ understanding of the Program.

Funding has also enabled schools to access community resources in ways that are very pertinent to the needs of the particular school. For example:

“Careers Expos in South Western Sydney strengthened by Regional School to Work funding - encourage speakers to link to the employability skills - brings in industry perspectives”
– School or regional representative

“We have used School to Work funding to employ a ‘mentor’ who comes in once per week. She has worked with a targeted group, mostly in checking they are up to date... liaising on their behalf with teachers, working on a community project with one of the council’s youth workers. We could not do this Program without funding”
– School or regional representative

Exploring a wide variety of alternate funding sources which match the broader vision of the learning experiences that School to Work supports, was seen to offer considerable opportunity for the future.
9.0 Conclusions and Opportunities

This Evaluation has identified a large number of processes and practices which have been beneficial in achieving the aims of School to Work. Chapters 5 to 8 distilled the data collected during the evaluation into a range of features that are associated with the effective planning and implementation of School to Work.

This Chapter focuses once again on those features to draw conclusions and identify the opportunities to consolidate or extend the practices that support School to Work initiatives within schools. As well, it points to the different ways in which schools, Regions and the Vocational Education in Schools Directorate can grasp those opportunities.

The major challenge for the Program is to strengthen the features described, and to extend their impact to other sites where more widespread success has yet to be achieved.

9.1 Support from the school senior executive

Section 5.1 indicates the central importance of obtaining the active support of the school senior executive. In particular, this support:

- Ensures the allocation of the school’s effort and resources to the Program
- Increases the likelihood and effectiveness of whole school planning
- Gives credibility and authority to the Program
- Gives impetus to an enterprising culture within the school

To achieve the active support of the school senior executive, there is the opportunity for:

- Regions to provide information and where possible, data on the ways in which School to Work helps students achieve important employability skills and transition objectives, without sacrificing good academic performance.
- Regions to provide information on sources of funding that are available for School to Work related activities
- Schools to collect and analyse data on student outcomes resulting from their participation in the School to Work Program. This provides evidence for ongoing support and allocation of resources.

9.2 Whole school planning

Section 5.2 indicates that whole school planning has significantly assisted schools in implementing School to Work effectively. In particular, whole school planning:

- Facilitates teachers from across curriculum areas in sharing ideas, practices and capacities
- Helps initiatives become embedded into school practice
- Supports teachers in integrating School to Work into their pedagogical practice
- Encourages planning and implementation of long-term projects and interventions

To extend the effectiveness of whole school planning, there is the opportunity for:

- Regions to encourage the senior executive of all schools to engage in, strengthen and extend their whole school planning of School to Work initiatives. Strategies for achieving this include articulating the benefits of this approach, developing professional skills in planning, providing planning tools and templates, and sharing experiences and success stories.
- Schools to commit to whole school planning. Whole school planning will enable them to identify innovative ways of collaborating across KLA areas, discover synergies in ideas, capacities and activities and to bring those together in novel configurations. Finally, it will facilitate achievement of real efficiency in implementing School to Work activities.
9.3 Establish a School to Work team

Section 5.3 demonstrates that schools with a School to Work team have demonstrated that this is a powerful approach to engaging whole school planning and cross-KLA initiatives. A School to Work team:

- engages the ideas and enthusiasm of more than just the School to Work Coordinator
- facilitates continuity of School to Work when a School to Work coordinator, or other key staff, leave the school or move onto other duties
- encourages a broadened sense of responsibility and accountability for School to Work.

To extend the effectiveness of School to Work teams, there is the opportunity for:

- schools to broaden the membership of these teams to expand the information, knowledge and community resources on which School to Work can draw. Potential members from within the school can include the Principal, Deputy Principals, the careers adviser, head teachers and teachers from a range of KLAs. Some schools have also already identified the value of seeking membership from amongst parents, employers and community members.
- schools that have not previously established School to Work teams to do so for the reasons outlined above
- Regions to encourage schools to establish these teams.

9.4 Integration of vocational learning throughout the curriculum

Section 5.4 indicates that a significant area of success for the Program is the extent to which vocational learning is being integrated across the curriculum. This has been a very impressive consequence of the Program. The key features of this are:

- the collaboration of staff from different Key Learning Areas
- the tailoring of programs to particular student needs
- holistic approaches to student learning
- the linkages to other NSW DET initiatives and priorities.

Approximately three-quarters of the respondent schools in the 2005 Annual Report reported embedding vocational learning in approaches to curriculum delivery. This highlights the importance of sustained effort in areas such as professional development and support for cultural change in schools.

To support integration of vocational learning throughout the curriculum there are opportunities for:

- regions and schools to engage further with teachers in exploring how their existing practices and curriculum contribute to students planning transitions and developing employability skills and how these practices and curriculum can be altered and extended
- regions and schools to be more active and systematic in discovering their students’ needs and exploring teachers’ current understandings of their students’ needs in planning for their future pathways

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24 Op. cit..
regions and schools to reinforce the perception amongst teachers that students can be powerful “contributors” or “collaborators” in their learning.

9.5 School practice

Section 5.5 indicates some significant areas in which school practice has been affected by the Program, most notably:

- students planning transition pathways
- students exploring career futures
- strengthening student outcomes through vocational learning
- enterprise learning
- revitalised career education
- individualised learning experiences
- targeted learning experiences
- access assured for all students
- engaging with students before Year 9
- measuring and reporting individual student outcomes

This has resulted in:

- increased student self-confidence
- increased student retention and engagement.

To maintain momentum in achieving changes in school practice that support School to Work, there is the opportunity for:

- schools, Regions and the Directorate to invest in building the awareness and skills of younger students to support them in their transition from school to work, using a developmentally appropriate model. A small but significant number of participants in the Evaluation commented on the need to introduce School to Work with younger students using strategies particularly suited to their developmental needs.
- schools, Regions and the Directorate to broaden the view of enterprise learning and its relationships to successful youth transitions
- schools and Regions to encourage community based learning
- schools to be encouraged to be involved in examining the student outcomes resulting from a client satisfaction and/or post-school destination collection process.

It is noted that post-school destination tracking is a requirement of the Skilling Australia bilateral agreement, which includes reporting on destinations, and early tracking. This has been recognised by DET in its 15 – 19 Years Strategy. A key challenge in this is that schools often lose contact with students when they leave. The main motivation for such tracking would to uncover the outcomes rather than the students’ actual placements per se. The need is to measure students’ outlooks and capacities, and to see what impact these have on their destinations.

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25 Bilateral Funding Agreement Between The Australian Government and NSW Under The 2005-08 Commonwealth-State Agreement For Skilling Australia’s Workforce, 2005

26 Our 15 to 19 Year Olds – Opportunities and Choice; An Education and Training Strategy for 15 to 19 Year Olds in NSW 2006 – 2009, Department of Education and Training 2006
schools and Regions to measure and report student outcomes. This could be achieved by trialling some different instruments which map employability skills and social outcomes (including perhaps the Student Pathways Survey, with suitable modification). Some issues for consideration would be the relative benefits of:

- sampling versus attempting to measure the whole population
- snapshot at one point of time vs longitudinal study.

9.6 Regional planning

Effective regional planning is a key to the successful implementation of the School to Work Program. Regional planning enables:

- targeted support to be given to schools that are enthusiastic about implementing School to Work, as well as to those schools that are still to embrace it fully
- networking between Senior School Executive and also between School to Work Coordinators and others responsible for the Program within their schools
- dissemination of success stories, novel approaches and effective implementation strategies between schools.

To extend the effectiveness of regional planning there are opportunities for:

- Regions to develop strategies for identifying the different levels of progress that schools have made in embracing School to Work, matched against the most appropriate interventions for each.
- Regions to support schools where the Program is having successes, by:
  - drawing attention to examples of successful programs within the Region and in other Regions
  - sharing success stories and ideas that give people heart
  - finding ways of articulating the outcomes in terms that help people see what they have achieved.
  - celebrating these successes.
- Regions to provide more intensive support to schools having trouble planning and implementing the Program. This could involve collaborating with the school(s) and any other relevant stakeholder to identify and explore the problems, generate options, and plan and implement solutions.
- Regions to develop regional strategies for encouraging and supporting schools which do not currently engage in School to Work effectively
- Regions to develop regional strategies for articulating more strongly the aspects of School to Work for which people in various contexts have lead responsibility
- Regions to support schools more widely to make and sustain connections between the School to Work Program and other programs, such as their school’s student welfare, leadership, boys’ education, gifted and talented, and learning support programs.
Regions to develop strategies for “spreading the flame that has been lit” using a variety of approaches including:
- pilots of particular programs in individual schools
- follow-on activities after a successful pilot, to avoid the disappointment that can occur when a pilot ends
- encouraging the development of School to Work within a cluster of schools, then actively encouraging and supporting them in leading other clusters around them
- using a “Light-house” (or “hub”) approach - a single school is supported in achieving a permanent change, which is then promoted to other identified single schools across the whole Region or state, perhaps those sharing some feature with the original school.

Regions to help schools activate School to Work by helping them identify processes and practices that are already aligned with or contributing to School to Work. The broader evidence suggests that some schools choose to have only limited involvement in School to Work because they perceive that it is an extra load too large to adopt. The overall conclusion that the data demands is that School to Work has supported in a large range of ways the successful transitions of many students.

Regions to consider how the Program can be implemented in schools even more effectively. For those schools that are engaging less successfully with the Program:
- what broadening or reconfiguring of the Program would help?
- what extra or different efforts would help at the Local, Regional and State levels?

Regions to develop an inter-Regional approach to the professional development of the role of school senior executive in relation to the Program

Schools, Regions and the Directorate involve the Secondary Principals Council and professional associations in encouraging effective involvement in School to Work

Regions to consider strategies for strengthening the leadership of School to Work by senior executive at the local and Regional levels

Schools and Regions to avoid the risk of School to Work efforts becoming marginalised by being perceived as a relevant only for those students currently disengaged from traditional approaches to school-based learning.

9.7 Professional learning

Chapter 6 draws attention to the importance of professional learning which:
- enables strong School to Work experiences for students.
- increases the enthusiasm and confidence of the School Executive and the teachers who are responsible for planning and implementing the Program
- occurs in a range of forms including:
  - professional development workshops and sessions
  - formal school-based professional learning
  - informal school-based professional learning
  - professional networks.
To respond to the level of interest and appetite demonstrated in the data for more professional learning at both the local and Regional level, there are opportunities for:

- schools and Regions to share ideas, experiences, suggestions and solutions
- schools and Regions to target particular groups (including senior executive, head teachers, career advisers, teachers). Each group has different needs so needs a different focus:
  - School senior executive: the factors that engage senior executive support for the Program
  - School-based School to Work teams: school planning to accommodate and embrace School to Work, how to engage and work with Local Community Partnerships and other community resources
  - Head Teachers and teachers: the relationship between employability skills and their KLA, how to create more vocational-friendly programs, encouraging and supporting staff in writing and implementing such Programs
  - Career Advisers: how School to Work can grow out of and enrich careers education, how to bring about cultural change within a school, how to work with Local Community Partnerships and other community resources
  - Local Community Partnerships and other community resources: how schools work.
- Regions and the Directorate to support the professional learning needs of the Regional senior executive, such as Regional Directors and School Education Directors. There is considerable evidence that where there has been significant investment in professional learning, planning is generally higher quality and more generally accepted and supported by the staff.
- schools and Regions to support and encourage the professional networks that consist of people with similar roles, interests and needs
- schools and Regions to complement those professional networks that consist of people with different roles, interests and needs. Benefits can also derive from networks of dissimilar people. A heterogeneous network enables its members to gather ideas about an issue from others with different perspectives, and to gain insights about the broader context. It may be useful to link people from widely dispersed circumstances, and to include people with a range of roles, perhaps including employers, parents and students.

9.8 Building Connections and Networks

Parents

The evidence discussed in Section 7.1 shows a wide-spread appreciation of the important role of parents in supporting youth transitions. Where parents are actively involved:

- students have opportunities for rich conversations about their transition plans
- students have another source of career information and support.

To increase the involvement of parents, there are opportunities for:

- schools and Regions to promote the use of the Logbook and student reports as a focus for transition-related conversations between parents and students
- schools and Regions to share successful experiences of engaging with parents, and develop further ideas, including novel approaches (eg using venues outside the school such as shopping centres and comfortable function centres).
schools and Regions to articulate explicit objectives regarding parent participation. A more concrete explication of the possibilities may assist with establishing strategies and benchmarks for parent involvement.

- schools and Regions to broaden the focus of professional learning to include increasing the capacity to engage with parents, employers and Local Community Partnerships.

### Employers

Section 7.2 indicates how building mutually beneficial partnerships with employers:

- helps students interact directly with employers
- helps employers to become aware of the employability skills of individual applicants for positions.

School to Work recognises the substantial benefits available to students from engaging with employers, and the evidence indicates that considerable achievement has occurred in this area. There are significant opportunities for:

- schools and Regions to share ideas and successful strategies about how to involve employers more easily and effectively
- schools and Regions to engage constructively with Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) to strengthen connections with employers

Local Community Partnerships potentially provide opportunities to add value to a school’s School to Work Program, and to build partnerships and relationships with stakeholders outside schools. In the most successful examples in the evidence, well developed communication channels have been established between LCPs and school-based School to Work committees.

This highlights the importance of establishing strong dialogue between LCPs, schools, Regions, the Vocational Education in Schools Directorate and employers. There are extensive opportunities to work more closely with LCPs for:

- schools and Regions to facilitate ‘getting to know your LCP’, through conferences, seminars and workshops. Very few teacher participants were aware of the purpose and benefits obtainable from partnering with LCPs. There was also little evidence of strong relationships between LCPs and with members of school senior executives.
- schools and Regions to host workshops and seminars on a range of topics of mutual interest, such as the real state of the job market, practical communication skills, how to relate well to teenagers (for employers, by teachers), problems and mutual interests, to encourage partnering. These interactions would need facilitative tools to ensure these don’t become “complaint” sessions.

### Community

Whether through mentoring arrangements with members of the community or through community-based learning and service learning, Sections 7.4 and 7.5 indicated that building relationships with the community:

- prepares students for entry into the adult world
- provides students with another source of support, encouragement and information
- strengthens students’ sense of connectedness and hence engagement in their learning.

The School to Work Program recognises that there are extensive resources available in the community, and the evidence indicates significant achievements have occurred in engaging those, through the local press, mentoring, service learning and projects which benefit the community. Some schools have actively sought to understand the needs of the community. There are opportunities for
schools and Regions to expand the number and range of learning experiences which involve places and people in the community. Many of the activities that support School to Work are not easily achieved within a school.

9.9 School to Work Resources

The Employment Related Skills Logbook and KLA Booklets

Participants mentioned very favourably the resources that are available within the School to Work Program, including the Vocational Learning KLA Booklets, the Logbook, and the on-line Student Pathways Survey. Chapter 8 described that these resources:

- provide a focus for students’ vocational learning activity and reflection
- support the integration of vocational learning across the Key Learning Areas.

To further increase the use of these resources, there are opportunities for:

- schools and Regions to develop new thinking about options for addressing the Logbook’s management issues (storage, accessibility)
- schools and Regions to build the Logbook’s strategic value for students managing their transitions:
- as a primary model for engaging parents, by supporting its use as a stimulus for transition-related conversations between students and their parents, especially where those conversations are not currently happening
- as a tool for teachers to report employability skills in student reports and their school references
- as a driver for student self-reflection, perhaps even with “triangulation” input from teachers, employers and parents.
- schools and Regions to consider alternative, parallel modes for the Logbook, such as an electronic version, which could contribute to the teachers’ easily sharing this information with parents
- schools and Regions to further extend the reach of the Student Pathways Survey
- schools and Regions to develop possible new resources, such as:
  - summative, student-level measure of outcomes
  - resources for age-appropriate approaches which deliver School to Work outcomes to younger students
  - tools which would help to engage and support parents, employers and the community, highlighting the benefits, suggesting approaches and using the terms that resonate for them.

Funding

Section 8.4 showed the importance of funding in establishing and strengthening School to Work, in:

- making time available for writing and adapting programs
- accessing resources
- helping deepen applicants’ understanding of the Program, through guidelines for funding.

Participants indicated that, currently, resources (including funding) are distributed with few difficulties. There is the opportunity to introduce more widely some of the examples in the data, such as:

- Regions forwarding some part of the funding to coincide with the start of the school year. Most school planning aligns with the school year, and so it causes some difficulties if funding is not available until Semester 2
- Regions allocating some part of the funding to activities for which schools must apply against a clear set of guidelines.

Bilateral Funding Agreement Between The Australian Government and NSW Under The 2005-08 Commonwealth-State Agreement For Skilling Australia’s Workforce, 2005

Enterprise Education, Vocational Education in Schools Directorate 2005

New framework for vocational education in schools. A comprehensive guide about pathways for young Australians in transition.
Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2001

Our 15 to 19 Year Olds – Opportunities and Choice; An Education and Training Strategy for 15 to 19 Year Olds in NSW 2006 – 2009,
Department of Education and Training 2006

Proposal for Evaluation of NSW School to Work Program, Vocational Education in Schools Directorate 2006

Report: Scoping Exercise to Evaluate the School to Work Program, Atelier Learning Solutions, 2006

School to Work – Creating Future Pathways, Vocational Education in Schools Directorate, 2004


Stepping Forward: Improving Pathways For All Young People,
Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2001

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century,
Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 1999
Stimulus Questions: Regional Focus Groups

When obtaining the data on which this Evaluation would be based, the following stimulus questions were used to provide a consistent focus on the Terms of Reference. The questions were drawn from focus questions articulated in the proposal for this Evaluation\(^{27}\) and the Scoping Report\(^{28}\). Participants were encouraged to see these questions as guiding the discussions, with the acknowledgement that the participants may have felt that they had more to say about some areas than others, because of their different roles. The evaluators invited participants to expand on anything they felt the Evaluation should know. The questions used were:

- the School to Work Program is about supporting students in learning about and planning their transition from school. What changes have occurred in your classroom, school or Region, because of the Program?
- What is an example of a highlight or success arising from this Program that has really helped?
- What new ideas or innovations have happened because of the Program?
- these successes and highlights we have been discussing - why have they happened so well? What has helped them to occur? What are the facilitating factors?
- What efforts or initiative by the Region have been most helpful?
- In what ways has whole-school planning been incorporating the careers and transition agenda?

Participants then moved around a series of eight workstations with specific, detailed questions below, writing their comments onto each workstation, followed by brief group discussion and elaboration.

**Students’ decisions about careers and transitions**
- What are some specific examples of how the Program has helped equip students to make these decisions more effectively?
- What knowledge or skills has the Program given students?
- What are some specific examples of how the Program has contributed to students’ capacity to take up their chosen careers and employment?

**Vocational Learning in KLA/subject classes**
- What are some specific examples of how vocational learning has been integrated into KLA Programs and initiatives?
- What Regional efforts have helped or facilitated?
- What DET / Directorate efforts have helped or facilitated?
- What other factors have helped or facilitated?
- What factors have hindered?
- What needs to happen or change for the future?

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\(^{27}\) Op. cit. p3, 4

\(^{28}\) Scoping Exercise to Evaluate the School to Work Program, Atelier Solutions 2006.
About Teacher Practice

- How have teachers made Vocational Learning occur within subject classrooms? What have been the real successes and novel approaches?
- How has the Program changed what teachers do? (Perhaps, think about student engagement, connectedness and authenticity)
- What are the elements that make up teachers’ ‘best practice’, in this Program?
- What Regional efforts have helped or facilitated?
- What DET / Directorate efforts have helped or facilitated?
- What other factors have helped or facilitated?
- What factors have hindered?

Partnerships with Employers

- What are some specific examples of effective partnership arrangements between schools and employers?
- What factors have helped or facilitated?
- What factors have hindered?

Partnerships with Parents

- What are some specific examples of partnerships with parents, helping students plan for and move through transitions?
- What factors have helped or facilitated?
- What factors have hindered?
- What other Programs or efforts are there to involve parents in this?
- How can the Program best be aligned with these in future?
- How has the Program accessed and used available resources?

Students at risk of not making successful transitions from school to work

- What are some specific examples where the Program has benefited these students?
- What factors have helped or facilitated?
- What factors have hindered?
- What other Programs or efforts are there to help these students?
- How can the Program best be aligned with these in future?
- How has the Program accessed and used available resources?

Strategic Issues

- How well does the Program help NSW DET to address current national priorities in student career development and transition?
- What strategic imperatives must the Program focus on into the future?
- What changes, if any, are required in the approach, organisation or implementation of the Program?

Case Studies and Success Stories

- What particularly successful approach, experience or event has happened within your Region that we should know about?
The Logbook

- Who guides or directs students to use the Logbook?
- How often does that person (above) use the Logbook with students?
- In what ways have they used it, that were particularly effective?
- What other factors have helped or facilitated?
- What factors have hindered?

If you have used the Logbook, please insert a PostIt Note in the section(s) that you have found most valuable.

KLA Booklets

- How often have you (or someone you know) used a KLA booklet?
- How have you/they found it most useful?
- What other factors have helped or facilitated?
- What factors have hindered?

If you have used a KLA Booklet, please insert a PostIt Note in the section(s) that you have found most valuable.

Stimulus Questions: Strategic Interviews

The following were the stimulus questions used to guide the strategic interviews.

For the Program to remain relevant into the future and impact significantly on the quality of students’ transitions from school to work, how should it respond to the following?

- the need for young people to have a repertoire of proactive skills that will support them in a labour market that is dynamic in terms of the knowledge and capacity sets employees will require
- the need for a much stronger focus on the development of enterprising skills, so that young people become more self-determining in their decision making and planning
- the need to ensure that students in Stage 4 develop skills and understandings that are ‘foundational’ in terms of their capacity to have successful transitions from school to work
- the desirability of students’ achievements in vocational learning being formally recognised and credentialled.
- the approaches that will bring the greatest possible clarity to the role of LCPs insofar as the School to Work Program is concerned
- the desirability of addressing how best to build and sustain partnerships with parents focused on student transition, especially given the extensive knowledge base about the importance of parental ‘influence’
- the desirability of establishing a reporting regime with a strong outcomes focus, maintained consistently over time. How to collect or access post-school destination data as a source of information to gain fuller understandings about the choices students have exercised, and to better inform strategic decision making at all levels (eg schools’ own post-school destination surveys).
- to what extent does the School to Work Program provide capacity for New South Wales DET to address current national priorities in student transition?
- What are the key strategic imperatives around student transition that the School to Work Program should have increased focus on into the future?
- What changes, if any, are required in the approach, organisation or implementation of the Program to enable these imperatives to be addressed effectively?