This pilot was undertaken by East Hills Girls Technology High School (EHGTHS) as part of the Board of Vocational Education and Training’s Personalised Learning: Improving VET Outcomes project in 2005. The aim of the pilot was to examine the use of the Student Pathways Survey, an online tool to inform practices in careers services and to enhance the quality of individual student career counselling.

The focus of the pilot was the effective use of the online survey tool, in support of the Department of Education and Training’s School to Work: Creating Future Pathways program.

EAST HILLS GIRLS TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL

East Hills Girls Technology High School prides itself as a learning community in which girls achieve high personal standards of learning and behaviour.

The school has an excellent reputation for high student achievement in the academic, creative and physical aspects of education. The dedicated, caring and experienced staff provide the students with a positive, quality learning environment. Praise and encouragement is emphasised to support student’s success at school.

The majority of students continue their studies to year 12 and beyond. Students have many opportunities to develop their talents and interests through the provision of a wide subject choice; by experiencing a range of technologies across the curriculum; and by participating in many extra curricular activities offered by the school. Established industry links further support and extend classroom learning experiences.

THE STUDENT PATHWAYS SURVEY AT EAST HILLS GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

The Student Pathways Survey originated in 2002 as a self-efficacy tool for students to report on the intended outcomes of the School to Work Program. It was also developed to provide actual student outcomes data. In 2004, it was tested as an online survey with 108 schools and 18,302 students in Years 9 and 11. These students were located in the Hunter/Central Coast Region and the South Western Sydney Region.

All students who complete the online survey receive an instantaneous feedback report, which include a personalised combination of direct feedback and qualitative scored feedback. The report encourages students to take responsibility for their own career development and gives practical ideas for progressing this goal.

School careers advisers have password entry to a secure website which gives careers advisers direct access to their school’s student survey responses and feedback reports to enhance the quality of individual student career counselling.

Principals of schools involved in the 2004 testing process, received reports for their school which included aggregated responses to each question for both Year 9 and Year 11, broken down by gender. Each region also had access to aggregated area and regional reports for each of the survey
items, broken down by gender. The reports included aggregated responses for Year 9 students, Year 11 students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and Arabic students.

Through involvement in the testing process and the Personalised Learning project, the careers adviser at East Hills Girls High School has indicated interest in using both individual student data and school data to better inform the school’s engagement with the School to Work Program.

The survey and the personalised feedback report provide the careers adviser data to counsel individual students. The feedback report also informs students of steps they can take to begin self-managing their career planning.

The online tool was effectively used by a range of EHGTHS students in both 2004 and 2005 to inform their thinking about careers. The careers adviser used teaching sessions to promote the tool and encouraged students to complete the survey and bring their results to one-on-one counselling sessions. The principal also found the aggregated data to be of considerable value in contributing to a fuller profile of each student in her school.

TESTIMONIAL

The careers adviser at EHGTHS, Jenny Williams, believes that the Student Pathways Survey fits well with her school’s focus on student goal setting:

The online tool is good because it will make students think about the future and it fits with the school’s program on goal setting.

(J. Williams, October 2005)

Year 10 students at EHGTHS who used the online survey tool in Year 9 saw benefits in using it:

It’s well done. It helped guide me. It supported my wish to be an architect and/or do other things. It helps you to have a better understanding of your career options.

(R Butkobich, October 2005)

The careers adviser is committed to using the online survey in future:

I will use the student’s results in my career counselling. By going through the students’ responses and prompting further discussion, I will try to help and give them some strategies to use.

(J Williams, October 2005)

The careers adviser sees the online tool supporting personalised learning:

Personalised learning is the individual taking responsibility for their own learning and actions. Any tool that can assist that is good. It is up to the individual to take on board what the tool shows them. If students feel they need additional assistance with career planning, they can use the tool at any time. The girls can go and do it themselves.

(J Williams, October 2005)

The School Principal believes that the positive results from the use of the online survey “gives us a base for further directions as to how we can develop personalised learning in our school”. The principal found the online survey data affirming:

The results of the program were very positive. It was reaffirming to the student about what additional career information she may wish to seek and it was reaffirming to the careers adviser about what support she needs to provide to individual students. If we saw anything of concern in the survey data we would address it. If the data indicated an area of need, we would address it. I hope the initiative stays.

(V Necyporuk, October 2005)

For more information on the Board of Vocational Education and Training’s Personalised Learning: Improving VET Outcomes project, the report can be downloaded at: http://www.bvet.nsw.gov.au/pdf/Final%20Report-Personalised%20Learning.pdf