Calling all Parents . . .

Of the 4 key groups that have critical roles in supporting young people to achieve, the schools, business and community groups are more easily identifiable and accessible. By contrast, parents and families of our youth are less visible. While School Councils and Parents & Friends associations offer avenues for participation in a school, many parents seem to feel less empowered than they'd like. Over the next 5 months, we want to establish ways to support parents to work more closely with their schools and community to be better able to support their children for successful achievement of Year 12.

Learning at school, learning at home

We expect a lot from our schools . . . particularly when our children only spend about 1000 hours in effective learning each year – about 25% of their time awake. Learning doesn't just take place in school, but across all of a child's waking time, including at home. If our children are to have the best opportunities, learning at home needs to support learning at school and vice-versa.

So, it was interesting to find UK research identifying the main areas of discord between learning at school and learning at home. Children seek their parents' help and parents want to help, but 83% of parents found this a challenge. To make matters worse, 58% of children said their parents confused them by explaining things differently to the teacher.

When parents weren't able to help, they felt annoyed and frustrated;
- 20% were annoyed that the school hadn't told them what was being learned so that they could help
- 35% wished they knew how the teacher was teaching it, so they could help
- 30% were frustrated that they'd forgotten things they had learned at school.

So, 85% of the discord between learning at school and learning at home could be wiped away if we had ways for parents to engage with teachers in the learning process.

We also hear that maths and science are “problem” areas. Fewer students are taking these courses and for teacher, it seems they’re hard fields to teach – especially if some teachers are not qualified in these fields. For children, maths and sciences were the topics parents were the least able to help with (57%). For parents, these same subjects made up 64% of the difficulties.

What could our children achieve if we could align the support of both parents and teachers? Is this a possible area for a school-parents partnership in 2011?

Food for thought.
Youth Connections Program

This program provides a holistic approach to servicing young people at risk including support for individual young people and the broader community. This program is available to eligible young people who are most at risk of disengaging, or already disengaged from education, family and/or the community. Service delivery is characterised by flexible and individualised case management to young people to remain engaged or re-engage them with education and/or further training, and to improve their ability to make positive life choices.

Youth Connections services are classified in four types:

- **Types 1 and 2:** Case management services to young people who are most at risk of disengaging or who are severely disengaged from education.
- **Type 3:** Activities focused on finding, connecting with and engaging severely disengaged young people.
- **Type 4:** Services which build capacity to assist education providers.

Youth Connections Providers will also work to strengthen and better coordinate services in their regions and build the capacity for key stakeholders.

The Youth Connection provider for Eastern Adelaide is Workskil Incorporated with a Stepney office.

Employment Options Inc, is the Adelaide Hills Youth Connections service provider . . . see article below.

Employment Options Inc. (EO) is a community-based, secular, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to providing high quality employment services to people in the local communities of Mount Barker and Victor Harbor.

EO also provides services for young people throughout the Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island areas through the Youth Connections program.

They have a special focus on those who are unemployed and/or disadvantaged. Their range of employment programs and services help each year more than 2500 people aged 13-24 who are facing challenges. They help young people to reconnect or stay connected with education, training, employment, family and community.

Individual assistance from qualified Employment Options youth workers is available for issues such as:

- accommodation or legal problems, drugs or alcohol, no income, no support from family, not feeling able to cope, or feeling sad or angry;
- ways to get back into training or to finish education;
- help with problems staying at school;
- help to work out a future pathway;
- find and succeed in work or study.

Additional to this support, EO organises fun activities and programs to build relationships:

- pizza lunches;
- art and music related activities;
- drop-in facilities for recreation, chilling out and training;
- workshops like independent living skills - rental training, budgeting, paying bills, healthy living.
Partnering In Action
Torrens Valley Community (TVC) Partnership

Although initially developed as an urgent partnership for a specific issue, the TVC partnership has the potential to bring together key stakeholders to build their capacity and encourage them to link and collaborate for their young people. Through the partnership, AITEC is supporting the development of an alternative learning program, facilitating connections with industry, community and parents by:
- arranging industry visits or speakers at schools,
- facilitating meetings,
- coordinating a parent’s forum
- linking students learning with the community and
- consultation with community and industry.

One outcome of this partnership is the launching of an alternative learning pilot program at Birdwood High School (see page 4).

A really exciting initiative within this TVC partnership involves exploring, creating and developing innovative spaces for young people to access services such as co-location with local business, mobile youth services and youth support outreach opportunities.

Out And About

22 Digital Media (DM) industry leaders contributed to an Industry Consultation Forum jointly organised by DECS and AITEC at ABC Collinswood. DM teachers were very enthusiastic with the feedback and support provided by industry for the DM Industry Pathways Program and their work.

Partnership’s objectives.

1. To bring together education, community, business and families to address youth issues in the region that focus on engagement and re-engagement within education to improve attainment levels.
2. Provide a flexible learning program to students most at risk of disengaging.
3. Provide real world activities within the community for learning of employability and life skills.
4. Provide more attractive options for young people to access youth services.
5. Engage / re-engage parents with Birdwood HS and other practical learning options.
6. To improve engagement between young people and the community they live in.

Marion Coady, Ray Marino and Vivien Rusk with AITEC team members during the Adelaide Hills Principals Dinner.

Geoff Ewens, AITEC (standing) with members of the Campbelltown Council Service Club Advisory Committee.
Eastern Adelaide - all BMWs and McMansions?

For a long time, Eastern Adelaide has been considered a privileged area and resources have been allocated based on the region’s high Socio Economic Status (SES). However, it is important to look past the glossy image to examine the reality.

The region is home to a large number of schools that draw students from the wider metro area and indeed rural and remote regions (as boarders). Many of these live in communities with much lower SES, particularly those boarders from SA and NT’s indigenous communities. Even within the Eastern Adelaide region’s residents, the educational profile is not homogeneous. It is home to significant populations of migrants and indigenous people. This is reflected in the graphic of educational achievement (see right) which highlights significant variation across the region.

Such granular data suggest that help in the form of educational resources and community support would be appropriate to address longstanding educational disadvantage and foster social inclusion.

Unlike those from other regions, Eastern region students have had limited access to VET, including paraprofessional career training. There is no Australian Government Trade Training Centre based in Eastern Adelaide - all BMWs and McMansions?

Education InterActs with Community

Alternative Learning Program

Birdwood High School, with the support of Employment Options, Torrens Valley Community Centre and AITEC, organised a two week program for a group of young people at risk of disengaging. 17 YR10 students both male and female participated in this program to build self-esteem and confidence, reengage with education and remain at school.

This program was delivered between 21 June and 2 July 2010 and included practical hands-on learning and project-based learning. This program was very successful in enhancing community participation and helping the students to reconsider their career pathway.

For the rest of the 2010 school year, a flexible individualised learning program is being structured for the participants. Students will do Maths, English and other appropriate subjects that will be tailored to their career aspirations, e.g. butcher, builder, electrician.

Participants at the Entertainment Centre learning about career opportunities in event management, administration and marketing.

Kieran Smith, Employment Options Youth Worker and Program Facilitator (centre) with AITEC team participating in one of the activities.

“This program... ... gave me more freedom for a little bit. Helped me understand more about working for what you want.

... has been absolutely fantastic! The facilitator has done a great job with the kids”. ... has helped develop leadership skills and influence the group to work as a team to complete tasks.

Community Program Contributor and Teacher.

... has created amazing changes in my son. He is excited about attending and now he is taking care of his appearance.

Parent.