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Parental Involvement in Schools or Parental Engagement in Learning?
At the recent Annual Forum for the South Australian Association of School Parent Clubs (SAASPC), the Minister for Education, Jay Weatherill, and the new Chief Executive, Keith Bartley each spoke about the importance of parents in the support of their children and learning. This extended to the critical importance of parents in supporting the learning of the child(ren). While cleaning the gutters and staffing the canteen are important tasks in schools, what if parents were able to better support the learning of their children? What if parents were aware of what was being taught at any time and were better prepared to be able to support this learning? How could learning be reinforced and outcomes enhanced if parents were actively engaged in learning?

Geoff Ewens, AITEC MD

Partnering In Action

Attainment in a Cultural
Context

The National Partnership on Youth and Attainment involves a commitment to all young people. One of the targets agreed is to improve attainment of Year 12 (or equivalent) for SA’s young people to 90% by 2015. Another is to enhance social inclusion and in particular, to halve the gap for Aboriginal youth attainment. Research suggests that educational progress is, by itself, not enough - there needs to be a strong cultural connection and relevance as well in order for the gap to be closed.

In 2010, the ATSI Career Pathways Dinner started AITEC and Western Futures’ combined work to help young Aboriginal people to aspire to a better future, engage with their parents, family and schools for continued learning and attainment. Successful learning role models were used to encourage aspirations and confidence, while family and parents were engaged on the same page as the students for learning, career options and pathways. We’d like to build on this for the future.

The objective of the workshop was to share ideas and explore:

- Canadian experiences using cultural context as an enabler for Aboriginal youth development;
- Interesting and useful lessons or opportunities for Aboriginal Australian young people and communities;
- How to strengthen family and community support for young Aboriginal students to succeed;
- What can be done together to move from good intent to outcomes for Aboriginal young people.

Members of the Aboriginal Pathways Advisory Group were engaged in levelling
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As part of the planning activities for the 2011 ATSI Pathways family event, a workshop was organised by the two partnership brokers with Gray Poehnell, an international career consultant and trainer, and a group of people with extensive experience working with Aboriginal young people and their communities.

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**Schools InterAct with Businesses.**

**Business School Connections Roundtable - just what does it mean?**

There is unparalleled change going on in our education systems. The bold transformation envisaged will see high quality 21st century education available wherever young people live, and regardless of their culture, socio-economic status, gender or background.

But is there enough capacity to deal with this change? Two months ago, the Business-School Connections Roundtable Report was released after months of visits around the country and listening to the views of educators, principals and business people. Last month, the Australian Government released its Response to the Roundtable Report which was largely very positive and in sync with the recommendations made.

But what has this to do with schools, teachers and day-to-day activity? Everything!

Schools dealing with a myriad of reforms have a willing and committed partner in business - with both as winners from the partnerships that are possible. For our Government and Business, “School-business relationships are not an add-on activity that competes with these priorities, but a key strategy to help schools implement the reforms and achieve their educational goals.” So, what has been recommended and well-received by key stakeholders? This is a précis of the Executive Summary of the Report (full details below).

### Better Capacity - relationship management skills

One of the areas we often see concerning teachers and principals is their confidence and skill to approach business, articulate the benefits of involvement, identify shared needs, develop mutual understanding, negotiate agreements, and build engagement. Business needs similar understanding and skills when working with educational staff - in schools or in regional offices. This spans pre-service and in-service training for teachers and business leaders also need to seek to develop relationships with principals as education leaders. The role of the Partnerships Brokers is critical to building this support relationship.

### Strengthening the Context

Business recognises that systems influence what happens in schools, so it is essential that these systemic policies should emphasise and encourage business-school relationships as “permissible” and a “normal and expected part of school activity”. In short, here is SA, DECS, Catholic Education and Independent Schools should support a culture change within schools to embrace partnering and harness the added capacity and capability of business.

**Engaging Business as Strategic Partners**

NAB’s Schools First is one of many examples whereby Business initiates programs to address the same priorities as education. Business feels that it is time for business, industry, government and education to work together instead of separately.

New pathways into teaching, better forms of work experience, supporting curriculum development (a la the Digital Media IPP), capacity-development of School Councils and even awards for school-business partnerships are amongst many ideas that align the interests of education with business.

### Supporting Implementation

An Alliance for School-Business Relationships is proposed to help champion and assist with implementation of this strategy for the benefit of all.

### A Call to Action

It’s no longer a case of asking “do school-business partnerships help?” The answer is, of course, a definitive “YES”, but we moved beyond that some time ago. The question now is “how best to harness the benefits of working together?”

As your School Business Community Partnership broker, we’re here working to make partnerships a reality and if you’re not already working with us, perhaps it’s time to think about how we can help you engage with your partners in business or education.


Out And About

Trevor Lovegrove, DFEEST and Geoff Ewens at the Family Fun Day organised during the NAIDOC Week.

Geoff at the “Making a Difference” Conference organised by SAA/SPC (South Australian Association of School Parents’ Clubs Inc).

Don’t miss our next InterAct issue with everything you want to know about the outcomes of “ATSI Pathways — a family dinner”.

(Continued from front page)

Partnering In Action

Attainment in a Cultural Context

discussion around attainment/careers in a cultural context.

There was a demonstrated consensus and commitment to use the framework when working with young Aboriginal people, their parents and grandparents, specially when seeking to re-engage them.

Members of the Advisory Group having a conversation with Gray Poehnell, Aboriginal career coach from Canada.

Launch of Youth Space - HIVE 12 Twenty Five

The Tea Tree Gully Youth Centre launched on 24 August was based on a feasibility study strongly supported by the contribution of young people, community members, workers and agencies

This centre has definitely raised the bar in the development of youth friendly spaces.

Don’t miss our next InterAct issue with everything you want to know about the outcomes of “ATSI Pathways — a family dinner”.

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Addressing the partnering needs of schools, parents & families, business and community

Out And About (continued from page 3)

(LtoR) Sasha D. and Bernadette Sánchez at the Australian Youth Mentoring Network. According to their research, cross-cultural mentoring requires to identify whether or not a mentor from the same cultural background is the most appropriate one for a mentee on an individual basis.

(LtoR) Sasha D., Brian Sincock, Geoff E. and David Rigill at the session of the Rotary Club of Morialta where AITEC presented the SBCPB program and Rotary members agreed to work with local schools as part of the C3 Campbelltown Connections partnership.

DOC (Doctor On Campus) Project. Visit to Victor Harbor High School.

In the establishment of a Youth Mental Health partnership in the Hills, it is extremely important for AITEC to be aware of worthy models of youth mental health support that can be used and promoted as a benchmark. Having that in mind, AITEC’s staff undertook a search of the facts that make the DOC Project a thriving one.

DOC commenced in 2004 as a result of the sharing of concerns about issues surrounding local adolescents and their wellbeing, between members of Student Services at Victor Harbor High School and Medical Practitioners at the Victor Medical Centre (VMC).

Amongst the factors leading to this successful model for early intervention in adolescent mental health, the following can be mentioned:

- Dr. Anke Doley, from VMC is provided with a consulting area at the school and attends one day per fortnight. Bulk billing arrangements were negotiated with Medicare, so that there is no financial disincentive for students to use the service.
- Appropriate referral procedures have been established and additional on-campus psychological support is available (two psychologists as consultants).
- Support given by the Departments of Education and Health has been instrumental for DOC’s success as well as finding a way for the participant doctors to be able to consult in the school without a financial impost on their practices.
- One innovative tactic to avoid the stigma related to seek mental health support by young people was to create a one-stop site within the school for students.

In this way, students crossing the door of the Student Services building are not afraid of being “spotted” by their peers as they could come in there for meetings with their VET coordinator, the school counsellor, the Christian Pastoral worker or DOC’s members.

As to the outcomes, over 200 students between 12 and 19 years of age have used the program. A significant number of “troubled” adolescents who have been able to effectively reengage with learning and life in the community.

Reasons for referral have been anxiety, depressive symptoms and grief, in some cases leading to self-harm and suicide attempts. There has been strong support from students and parents, and an increasing tendency for male students, traditionally more reluctant to seek help, to use this service.

This initiative seems to corroborate that the most successful models of early intervention programs are based on collaboration between agencies including schools.

“It was hard to get kids to see doctors. So, why not bring the doctor to the kids!”

Colin Sibly, Victor Harbor HS

Multiple doors but one goal “in mind” behind all of them:

Students’ Mental Health & Social Wellbeing

(LtoR) Colin Sibly (Student Counsellor, Victor Harbor HS) and Sasha D. (AITEC)
Young women who leave school before finishing Year 12 could be unemployed almost five times longer than young women who have a degree, according to new research published by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

It found young women who leave school before completing Year 12 are likely to face more than 19 months of unemployment before getting their first ‘real’ job. In contrast, young women with degrees may well have a full-time permanent job in less than four months.

Analysis of the time it takes for young people to get jobs reveals that they fall into one of three categories:

1. Over half find work quickly with little to no search time and are made up of young people who have completed a post-school qualification.

2. Young people who have finished school but haven’t gone on to further study, can take up to two and a half years to get a job.

3. Young people who have not completed Year 12 or any post-school qualifications, 25% of them did not find a job in the timeframe covered by the survey.

Other key messages of the report:

- Young people who are better educated find work faster: those who complete Year 12 or post-school qualifications will find employment more quickly than young people who leave school early. But Year 12 completion itself does not give the same advantage as completion of a post-school qualification when it comes to finding full-time permanent employment.
- The type of post-school qualification does not change the speed of finding any job; university and VET graduates have similar experiences.

This report shows very clearly that the importance of education for labour market entrants is that it not only leads to better wages, but also to obtaining a job faster.

Mental Health Issues for Young People and Bullying
A parents’ session with Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg

On 4th July a large group of parents convened by one of the Secondary Schools in Eastern Adelaide attended a lecture regarding “Mental Health Issues for Young People and Bullying” by Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg. Their expectations were clearly surpassed judging by comments heard during the session. AITEC highly commends this initiative and wants to share with InterAct’s readers some resources recommended by Dr. Carr-Gregg for parents and young people.


“The Recess Queen” by Alexis O’Neill and Laura Huliska-Beith. Reading for children in the early school years and their parents.

“Destroying Avalon” by Kate McCaffrey. For parents, teachers and teenager students to gain a better understanding of the possible and very negative outcomes, that cyber-bullying can have on the victim.

“Bully blocking” by Evelyn M. field, A “must read” for parents who want to give their children the gift of a range of social and emotional competencies to help them traverse the sometimes rocky terrain of the schoolyard and beyond.

“Real Gorgeous. The truth about body & beauty” by Kaz Cooke. A funny and reassuring read packed with jokes and practical ways to find real self-esteem. As indicated by its author, this book is an indispensable boost for women aged 11-111.


Reach Out website.
Fact Sheets “Ten common thinking errors to challenge” and “Challenging Negative Self-Talk”. Useful tools to learn to notice negative self-talk as it happens, and consciously choose to think about the situation in a more realistic and helpful way. 1) http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/common-thinking-errors
2) http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/challenging-negative-self-talk

ReachOut Central. An online game designed to help young people to learn and improve skills for life such as communication, problem solving and optimistic thinking online in a virtual setting using real life scenarios. www.reachoutcentral.com.au/

TheMoodGym. An innovative, interactive web program developed by the Australian National University as a training program to help prevent depression in young people. It consists of five modules - all provided free of charge - an interactive game, anxiety and depression assessments, downloadable relaxation audio, a workbook and feedback assessment. http://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome

Action For Happiness. A movement for positive social change which brings together people from all walks of life who want to play a part in creating a happier society for everyone. www.actionforhappiness.org

Authentic happiness website. Free test at www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu

Kids Free 2B Kids. A group of Australians concerned about the increasing sexualisation of kids in the media, advertising and clothing industries. www.kf2bk.com

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg is one of Australia’s highest profile psychologists. Educated in Kenya, the UK, Australia and New Zealand he worked as an Associate Professor in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne before going into private practice.
Michael is also the author of 6 books including the best-selling ‘Princess Bitchface Syndrome: How to survive teenage girls’, his latest, ‘When to Really Worry’, was released in 2010.

(Left) Sasha Dragovevic (AITEC) and Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg.