Case studies of good practice in parent engagement in career education

Lauren Renshaw, Senior Research and Policy Officer, ARACY
Barbara Barker, Research Manager, ARACY

28th Annual VET Research Conference
Adelaide, 11 July 2019
Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth

**Collaboration**
**Evidence**
**Prevention**

Collaborative hub of 1980 members

- Researchers
- Children and youth
- Practitioners and professions
- Families and community
- Government
The Nest

A wellbeing framework for young people.

All young people are loved and safe, have material basics, are healthy, are learning and participating and have a positive sense of identity and culture.
Project Background

This project aims to:

• gather and distribute examples of approaches in parent engagement in career education;
• undertaken at a curriculum or state/territory level, within school-industry-community partnerships, and/or within single schools;
• that reflect current knowledge of good practice as highlighted in the existing literature.

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training to support the National Career Education Strategy
What is parent and family engagement in learning?

- Involvement does not equal engagement
- Creates a complementary and supportive environment between home and school
- Involves families, educators and students working in partnership
“Family engagement is… an intentional and systemic partnership of educators, families and community members… [who] share responsibility for a student’s preparation for school, work and life, from the time the child is born to young adulthood.”

(Weiss, Lopez & Rosenberg, 2010).
What does the evidence say?

*Parents and families:*

- Are the most significant influencers
- Have a limited understanding of pathways
- Lack confidence and support

Bandura, Barbaranelli, Vittorio Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Gemici, Bednarz, & Lim, 2014; Department of Education and Training, 2016a; Department of Education and Training, 2016b; PwC, 2017; Ithaca Group, 2017; Smith, et al., 2017; Centre for International Research on Education Systems, 2015; Polvere & Lim, 2015; Gore, et al., 2017; Hargreaves & Osborne, 2017; Torii & O’Connell, 2017; Griffin, 2017; Osborne & Circelli, 2018; Miles Morgan, 2012; Livingstone, 2009; Parliament of Victoria, 2018
What constitutes good practice?

- Building capacity and confidence
- Clearly communicating to families and students
- Addressing inequality

Good practice in parent and family engagement

Good practice in career education

How were case studies selected?

- National call-out to stakeholders
- Application template
- Selection criteria/requirement
- Limitations
Common methods

01 Curriculum development

02 Community/industry partnerships
Key challenges

• Resources and funding
• Attitudes and capacities of parents and families
• Parents not understanding
  o Developmental nature of career education
  o Students playing an active role
  o Changing nature of the ‘world of work’
• Digital and literacy skills
Final case studies

- 7 case studies
- NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and ACT
- 3 P-12 schools, 2 high schools and 1 community development program
- 3 based in regional areas, 4 urban
- 3 case studies undertaken among students and families of diverse cultural backgrounds
- 4 reflect work undertaken with students and families of low socio-economic backgrounds
Key mechanisms for good practice

Preparing for the ‘real world’
Expanding horizons
Promoting conversations at home
Connecting families and communities
Preparing for the ‘real world’

• Students and their families require exposure to the everchanging ‘world of work’. In this, families and parents can be an important resource to utilise.

• Case studies:
  • embed tasks and activities related to specific occupations to subject curriculums
  • create spaces and opportunities for students to engage with industry experts outside of the classroom
Preparing for the ‘real world’

Examples include:

• inviting local industry experts to develop learning modules with teachers
• providing field trips to workplace sites
• facilitating formal work placements with local industries
• providing advice and information on how to build a resume, workplace rights and superannuation
• inviting parents to be guest speakers or host field trips
Expanding horizons

• Parents and families need to be taken along the same journey of exploration

• Case studies:
  • provide opportunities for students to self-reflect and explore passions, strengths and interests
  • tailor communication to families to focus on their child
  • provide updated and accurate information across a range of post-school options and career choices
Expanding horizons

Examples include:

• using emails, online platforms and apps, one-on-one meetings and phone calls to provide samples of classwork to parents and to discuss upcoming work placements

• facilitating parents to lead career education events in their local community
Promoting conversations at home

• Discussions about post-school decisions primarily happen in informal environments – around the dinner table or in the car

• Case studies:
  • enable these discussions to happen early (not waiting until Year 10)
  • frame these discussions by the student’s passions and interests
Promoting conversations at home

Examples include:

• formal Pathways Plans and Passion Projects to frame discussions with parents and family members about a student’s interests, strengths and goals

• showcase events and presentations
Connecting families and communities

- Observed rarely with only one case study showing meaningful engagement with the local community
- Vital drivers include having a resourced project coordinator with industry experience, local contacts and time
- Benefits include students gaining a more realistic notion of possible pathways, support in the face of ‘failure’, and networks and contacts to facilitate school-based or post-school placement or employment opportunities
Connecting families and communities

Examples include:

• community members sharing their work expertise, stories and experiences with school students and staff to develop applied learning opportunities and activities

• showcase day for families, community and industry
Critical enablers
Content and implementation

01 Broader than careers and jobs
Partnerships

02 Use of subject-matter experts
Leadership

03 Flexibility
What did we learn?

- Parent and family engagement is resource intensive but results in the best outcomes for students and their families.
- Parents are a valuable resource to be utilised with the right support.
- Requires the provision of accurate and accessible information about the range of post-school pathways to parents and families – tailored to the strengths and interest of their child.
- Delivered by a project coordinator/liaison officer to create practical and trust-based connections between educators, industry and family/community.
- Works best when facilitating conversations between family and students early (before Year 10).
Resources

• Global Family Research Project (led by Dr Heather Weiss): https://globalfrp.org/
• Looking Out, Looking In – an article by Dr Debbie Pushor (Uni of Saskatchewan), discussing how educators and schools might challenge their traditional views of families to build authentic engagement (2011)
• Mitchell Institute (2018): Connecting the Worlds of Learning and Work
• Mitchell Institute (2017): Preparing Young People for the Future of Work
• Parliament of Victoria (2018): Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools
• National Career Education Strategy and resources: https://www.education.gov.au/school-work-transitions
Other references

Thank you..

Written profiles and videos for each case study to be launched later this year…

WATCH THIS SPACE!!!

Lauren.Renshaw@aracy.org.au
Barbara.barker@aracy.org.au

To receive ARACY notifications visit
www.aracy.org.au/register