

# Support document for regions targeting 15-19 Year Olds

Supporting students who are most at risk of  
disengaging from education, training or employment



## **SECTION 1: PURPOSE**

Currently most 15-19 year olds are studying full-time or part-time in schools. A recent study indicated that thirty percent of NSW government school Higher School Certificate (HSC) graduates enter university, over twenty-three percent enter Vocational Education and Training (VET), around seven percent become apprentices, five percent become trainees and many directly enter the workforce.<sup>1</sup>

*Our 15 to 19 Year Olds - Opportunities and Choice: An Education and Training Strategy for 15 to 19 Year Olds in NSW 2006-2009* has three strategic goals:

- Aiming Higher – to encourage students to realise their potential by raising their own expectations and monitoring their progress
- Supporting Strongly - to develop students who are valued and respected, more engaged in their studies and better able to make informed career choices
- Strengthening Connections - to improve student opportunities and learning outcomes through the latest technology and enhanced partnerships.

A minority of students in this age group are still not engaged in work or study. As a society, this is a crucial issue that must be addressed.

This support document will provide regions with a range of suggested strategies to support the implementation of:

***Our 15 to 19 Year Olds- Opportunities and Choice: An Education and Training Strategy for 15 to 19 Year Olds in NSW 2006-2009***

and

***School to Work Plan: Looking Forward 2006-2010***

This document will further assist regions to identify, develop, implement and monitor strategies to support the needs of their 15-19 year old students most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment.

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<sup>1</sup>*Our 15 to 19 Year Olds- Opportunities & Choice, an Education and Training Strategy for 15 to 19 Year Olds in NSW 2006-2009*, NSW Department of Education and Training 2006 p2

## **SECTION 2: YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK**

Young people at risk are those who are at risk of disengaging from education or training and young people re-engaging with learning after leaving school early.

Research shows that:

- early school leaving is negatively related to future sustained long-term employment prospects and the possibility of entry into further education and training
- many young people disengage from education and training after an early history of low levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy, and poor attendance
- the cohort of young people at risk is a culturally diverse and heterogeneous group
- some young people in this group will have an intellectual disability, an emotional disorder or experience learning difficulties. Some of this group will have accessed disability support services but most will not.

Students may also suffer educational disadvantage because of their:

- socio-economic status
- gender
- cultural and linguistic diversity or
- geographical isolation.

Dr Pat Thompson (2001) noted that schools and school systems must be concerned with four key areas to address the needs of young people at risk of disengaging from education and training. These key areas were identified as:

- access
- categorisation
- opportunity
- participation.

## **SECTION 3: SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

The document should be distributed widely in regions.

Regions may like to consider the following factors in trying to define 'at risk' to focus their support for 15-19 year old students:

- educational factors such as poor literacy or numeracy, poor academic performance, discouragement with school, bullying or alienation
- personal factors such as medical conditions, disabilities, substance abuse, low self-esteem, depression, poor social skills, poor discipline, or such a deep-seated inability to conform to acceptable community standards that the person cannot effectively participate in education, training or employment
- social, cultural and community issues such as homelessness, family violence, gender, sexuality or a history of criminal behaviour or institutionalisation (for example, time spent in foster homes or correctional or other juvenile facilities), carer responsibilities or significant financial barriers.

Regions and schools may consider the following questions as prompts when decisions are being made about support for students at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment.

### **Access**

- Are young people able to take up educational programs that meet their specific and collective needs and interests?
- Are there particular matters of attendance, health and welfare issues, lack of English instruction, particular physical facilities and ways of doing things that are working to limit student and family access?
- Are there school structures and cultures that act as barriers?
- Are the knowledges that count and information about why they count, equally available to all young people?

### **Categorisation**

- Is family, culture and/or neighbourhood used as an explanation for inequity and lack of access to education and training services?
- Do young people and their families have a say in how they are named and characterised?
- Can all young people and their families tell their story and have it heard and, where necessary, acted on?

## Opportunity

- Do all young people get quality support in making choices about the programs and knowledges they will take up?
- Is there explicit monitoring of and intervention in systematic patterns of inequitable choices?
- Are all young people able to build positive identities in the school?
- Can and do all young people engage in the productive individual and collective work that they and others value?

## Participation

- Can all young people meaningfully engage with the curriculum and life in the school?
- Can they get pleasure and reward from their participation?
- Do they have a part in making decisions about what they want and need?
- Are all young people able to achieve the knowledges and repertoires of practice that will enable them to be active contributors to families, communities and economies?<sup>2</sup>

Regions may conduct a review of their current and projected provision to identify priorities for 15 to 19 year old students who are in Stages 5 and 6, and who are most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment.

Regions should develop a 15-19 year old Regional Action Plan utilising the information from the regional review.

- This plan can identify those regional initiatives that will support the 15-19 year old students, who are most at risk in terms of attendance, retention and engagement in learning, particularly those in Priority Schools.
- This Action Plan can highlight the broad and flexible range of subject options and opportunities relevant to the needs of every learner.
- Regions may develop innovative approaches which address factors (such as language and cultural background, gender and geographic location) which intersect to impact on the learning outcomes of students from low socio-economic status communities.

Key regional staff, in consultation with key regional committees, should play an important role in the identification, implementation and evaluation of strategies to support Stage 5 and 6 students who are most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment.

The strategies in Section 4 are included to assist regions to support 15 to 19 year olds to become fully engaged in education, training and or employment.

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<sup>2</sup> P Thomson, 'Young People: risk and/or assets', Working Together- Reducing the Risk Conference Papers 2001 p.2

## SECTION 4: SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

The following strategies have been grouped to support relevant sections of the three strategic goals of *Our 15 to 19 Year Olds - Opportunities and Choice: An Education and Training Strategy for 15 to 19 Year Olds in NSW 2006-2009*.

### **AIMING HIGHER - Higher Expectations**

*Students will be encouraged to aim high and to understand the benefits of education and training.*

*Students will be encouraged to remain in education and training to pursue courses which lead to university, TAFE, skilled employment and satisfying lives. It is important to continuously look for innovative and helpful ways to support 15-19 year olds to both aim high and to reach the places they are aiming for.*

**Intended outcome:** Regions provide more targeted structures designed to support those students who are most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment to raise their expectations and to realise those expectations, particularly in Priority Schools. It is important that regions continue to look for innovative and helpful ways to support 15-19 year olds to aim high.

### **SUGGESTED STRATEGIES**

#### **To support the *School to Work Program***

Regions provide strategic direction and leadership for continuous improvement of the *School to Work (STW)* program that aims to raise expectations for student career development in Stage 5 and 6 including students at risk of leaving school early.

Suggested strategies include:

- use of the annual *School to Work Regional Report* to inform regional strategies to raise students' career expectations in Stage 5 and 6
- supporting principals to use the *Student Pathways Survey: School Report* to a) identify the quantum of students considering leaving school early and those with less confidence in their career and transition planning, and b) to inform more targeted delivery of their STW initiatives and career development support to those students
- provision of STW funding grants to schools or networks of schools to encourage creative and innovative projects to raise student aspirations, improve their career and transition planning capacity and build confidence of at risk students e.g. through building on the opportunities presented by the *Student Pathways Survey*

- support school communities to provide students at risk with career role models that foster resilience and inspire confidence, determination and achievement.

### **To support Professional Learning**

Regions provide professional learning opportunities for teachers, school executive and regional consultancy on the development of educational practices that raise expectations of students in Stage 5 and 6.

Suggested strategies may include:

- training for executive staff and key school personnel to identify and then address the factors that limit student and/or parent expectations, particularly of students in Priority Schools
- identifying schools where high student expectations have resulted in improved performance in Stages 5 and 6
- disseminating effective practice via regional communication networks
- continuing support for teachers to embed quality teaching principles in their daily classroom practice to improve the learning outcomes of Stage 5 and 6 students
- enhancing teacher professional learning to address issues such as adolescent development, providing for individual differences and youth culture
- supporting schools to identify emerging technologies that have the potential to improve learning outcomes particularly for students most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment
- supporting teachers to more effectively use technology to link learners around special study and interest areas
- increasing links with TAFE Institutes and universities, where applicable, to increase student awareness of potential career options
- expand opportunities for vocational education programs for students in Years 9-12, particularly targeting Aboriginal students.

### **Suggested evidence of the impact of regional support to encourage higher student expectations**

- Evaluations of staff attending regional professional learning activities
- Regional use of the annual *School to Work* Regional Report to identify specific strategies targeting students at risk of leaving school early for inclusion in the Regional Action Plan

- Regional identification of practice that improves the performance of students at risk and the dissemination of those practices
- Increased proportion of schools reporting in the annual online STW Report that they are using the Student Pathways Survey (SPS) to identify the number of students considering leaving school early
- Increased proportion of schools using the SPS to inform improved school practices that support students potentially at risk and encourage them to continue their learning
- Regional staff identify changed school practice as a result of professional learning, funding grants, targeted initiatives and access to relevant school data
- Regions support communities of schools to meet individual needs of students and promote innovative practice
- Growth in student performance as measured by external data
- Improved qualitative data about raised student expectations
- Teachers express satisfaction with regional training to implement emerging technologies in the classroom
- Increased student awareness of post school options at TAFE and universities as measured by evaluation data
- Increased numbers of Years 9-12 students engaged in vocational education programs, targeting the students most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment
- Regions support schools to identify structures and regular opportunities to use inspiring career role models to support 15-19 year old students at risk e.g. through links with Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) and other community organisations.

## **SUPPORTING STRONGLY – Better Informed Choices**

*Students who are well supported and who know they are valued and respected are more likely to be engaged in their studies. They are more likely to achieve good results and stay at school or TAFE and are more likely to undertake further education and training.*

**Intended Outcome:** Regions provide support to schools so that the 15-19 year old students who are most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment can make informed choices about their future.

### **SUGGESTED STRATEGIES**

#### **To support the *School to Work Program***

Regions provide professional learning opportunities for teachers, school executive and regional consultancy in practices and organisational structures that support a whole school approach to student career development.

Suggested strategies may include:

- promoting successful *STW* initiatives that particularly support career and transition planning for 15-19 year old students considered most at risk
- making connections between school and life after school, for example, through vocational learning across the curriculum
- using the Department's *Leading the way in school and classroom practice* Boys and Girls Education Strategy support document. In particular strategies and implementation ideas from the various *Teaching and learning* sections (see also the evaluation matrix)
- encouraging a team approach to the delivery of *STW* program in schools by supporting and encouraging their attendance at Career and Transition Team training
- training members of school Career and Transition Teams (CTT) to more effectively coordinate support for student career development and vocational learning across the KLAs with particular consideration given to those most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment
- encouraging principals to take up the opportunity to have a teacher trained as a Transition Adviser (TA) to provide targeted support to students at risk
- supporting TAs with professional learning and networking opportunities e.g. through collaborative initiatives across one or more regions

- establishing a TA network e.g. across two regions and providing further professional learning opportunities to support them assist students at risk
- maintaining networking and professional learning opportunities for Career Advisers (CAs) to ensure they remain up-to-date with the latest career information, career planning approaches, education and training opportunities, changing workplace practices and local employment and education avenues in order to best support their school's career and transition planning initiatives, their colleagues such as KLA teachers and TAs, and the needs of individual 15-19 year old students at risk
- identifying key industry and community partners who are willing to provide interactive career expos, markets and trade fairs that inform students' career choices
- expanding the use of work-related learning experiences to support better informed career choices by 15-19 year old students at risk
- encouraging schools to undertake training to implement student-led Career Search projects through Stage 5 Board of Studies Work Education
- fostering professional learning to encourage collaborative initiatives between school(s) and community to expand Aboriginal students' career aspirations and educational engagement by proactively identifying and/or creating relevant career exploration opportunities
- providing professional learning that encourages a range of enterprise learning initiatives that help students to develop a broader range of informed career choices
- encouraging more schools to offer the Board of Studies *Work Education* Course in Stage 4 and 5 and Board of Studies *Work Studies* Course in Stage 6
- encouraging schools to consider how best to support the vocational training aspirations of 15-19 year old students at risk, for example, through the appropriate choice of VET in Stage 5 and Stage 6.

### **To support Professional Learning**

Regions provide professional learning opportunities for teachers, school executive and regional consultancy on the development of educational practices that result in improved decision-making about career options by students in Stage 5 and 6.

Suggested strategies may include:

- training for executive staff to identify and then address the factors in the learning environment that impact on the engagement and retention of Stage 5

and 6 students, particularly those in Priority Schools, for example, the implementation of purposeful learning for Stage 5 students

- supporting teachers to be more aware of the links between what is taught and future study and work options including subject selection, career planning and transition to work
- identifying and sharing effective practice with a particular focus on the learning environment through regional communication networks
- identifying and sharing targeted support structures and programs to maintain learning and engagement of students identified as being at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment
- sharing current research relating to the learning needs of 15-19 year old students
- supporting action research projects examining the issue of improved student engagement, particularly in Priority Schools
- identifying and sharing practice where schools have developed strategies to allow students to have greater input into their learning and learning environment particularly in Priority Schools
- providing personalised support by implementing a structured mentoring program for the most at risk Stage 5 and 6 students
- funding clusters of schools to work collegially to address identified specific local needs that impact on the career choices of young people
- fostering links with regional TAFE institutes to investigate and plan effective transition pathways from school to TAFE or vocational training. This may include the provision of a *Taste of TAFE* to provide Years 9 and 10 students with hands on skills training to assist them in determining career options.

### **Suggested evidence of the impact of regional support to encourage better informed choices**

- Evaluations of staff attending professional learning activities
- Regional identification and dissemination of practices and learning environments that improve the performance of students at risk
- Increased proportion of schools in the region have an integrated team approach to the implementation of the *STW* program including vocational learning across the KLAs
- Increased proportion of schools have a trained Transition Adviser (TA) who is part of the team approach to the provision of career and transition support in their school

- TAs are supported by regions e.g. through cross regional networks of TAs and also CAs
- Improved engagement and retention of students identified as being at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment as a result of targeted support structures and programs
- Evaluation survey at the conclusion of the mentoring program identifying a positive impact on students' career confidence particularly those students targeted as being the most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment
- Shared, innovative practice to address identified local needs
- Collaborative school/community partnerships to support targeted Stage 5 and 6 students
- Effective transition pathways from school to TAFE or vocational training for students most at risk of leaving school early
- Regional promotion of a wider range of models of workplace learning to cater for 15-19 year old students at risk
- Increased number of schools, particularly Priority Schools, undertake training to deliver Career Search in Stage 5 Work Education that supports students to take on leadership for learning about career choices
- Increased numbers of students are involved in the *Taste of TAFE* courses
- Students identify the *Taste of TAFE* course as having a positive impact in determining their career options
- Region provides opportunities for schools and their communities to collaboratively create career development initiatives that build on a student strengths model and provides relevant career exploration opportunities for Aboriginal students
- Increased number of schools delivering Board of Studies *Work Education* Course in Stage 4 and 5 and Board of Studies *Work Studies* Course in Stage 6
- Schools are enrolling individual 15-19 year old at risk students in VET in Stage 5 and Stage 6 as a result of a well informed student subject choices and career and transition planning process that specifically supports the needs of at risk students.

## **SUPPORTING STRONGLY – Career Planning**

*Students and parents should have access to information about programs and resources that will facilitate career decisions. Students should be assisted in their decision making about options and choices through personalised support or as groups of learners.*

**Intended Outcome:** Regions recognise and acknowledge the diverse needs of 15-19 year olds and provide targeted support to meet the needs of individuals and groups. More intensive and effective career support is provided for Stage 5 and 6 students who are most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment.

### **SUGGESTED STRATEGIES**

#### **To support the *School to Work Program***

Regional Management Plans ensure that teachers, school executive and regional consultancy are supported to identify innovative and collaborative projects and programs that provide targeted students in Stage 5 and 6 with effective career planning opportunities.

Suggested strategies may include:

- encouraging collaboration between CAs, TAs and the Regional Equity Coordinator to explore creative and innovative initiatives to provide both personalised and group career support for Stage 5 and 6 students who are most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment
- providing professional development for CAs and CTTs in schools to effectively use the on-line Student Pathways Survey (SPS) to support early identification of students most at risk of leaving school early and to use the SPS-School Report facility to provide more targeted individual and group career development programs and activities
- encouraging CAs and TAs to use Department's *Employment Related Skills Logbook* and/or *Logbook Online* entries to develop and document students' employment related skills and build students' confidence in career and transition planning
- identifying opportunities for parents/carers to be better informed supporters of 15-19 year olds through the provision of information and advice about career options and pathways for students most at risk of leaving school early e.g. through school developed initiatives and through the promotion of high quality activities provided by LCPs

- using the annual *School to Work* Regional Report to identify and share innovative career development strategies that schools implement to support students at risk of leaving school early.

### **To support Professional Learning**

Regions provide professional learning opportunities for teachers, school executive and regional consultancy on the development of educational practices that result in improved, coordinated career planning and support for students in Stage 5 and 6.

Suggested strategies may include:

- training for executive staff and key school personnel to lead the implementation of individualised career planning for students
- training for members of school career and transition teams to more effectively personalise the career support provided to Stage 5 and 6 students considered to be most at risk of leaving school early
- encouraging schools to provide more comprehensive advice to parents and carers regarding career options and pathways for students most at risk of leaving school early
- implementing regional practices that increase the coordination of support to schools. This could include closer linkage between personnel who support the implementation of the *School to Work* program, the Regional Equity Coordinator and members of the Regional Equity Committee
- implementing initiatives that complement the *School to Work* program to provide more individualised support for the most at risk students
- utilising the *Learn It For Life* program to support at risk students in Stage 5. It can be implemented by Transition Advisers, community/business mentors or school support staff such as teachers' aides
- providing personalised support by implementing a structured mentoring program for the most at risk Stage 5 and 6 students.

### **Suggested evidence of the impact of regional support to encourage effective career planning**

- Evaluations of staff attending professional learning activities
- Regional identification and dissemination of practices and learning environments that improve the performance of students at risk
- Increased collaboration between key regional and school personnel to support students most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment

- Coordinated regional support for schools
- Evaluations of workshops to facilitate a more coordinated school support for Stage 5 and 6 students, parents and carers.
- SPS case studies/snapshots of effective practice developed and shared in the region
- Regional goals around 15-19 year old students at risk having documented career and transition planning
- Student evaluation of the *Learn It For Life* program
- Evaluation survey at the conclusion of the mentoring program identifying a positive impact on students' career options particularly those students targeted as being the most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment
- Regions identify a range of initiatives that schools can use to assist parents/carers to be better informed about career options and pathways for students most at risk of leaving school early so that they can become 'career partners' to their 15-19 year olds e.g. through school developed initiatives and through the promotion of high quality activities provided by LCPs.

## **STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS: Highly Connected Relationships**

*Students should have greater choice and more opportunities to undertake learning programs that suit their individual needs by having access to school partners and technologies. They should be provided with multiple and diverse support that will inform their career options.*

**Intended Outcome:** Regions support schools to improve student opportunities and learning outcomes through enhanced local partnerships. Stage 5 and 6 students, who are most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment, are supported by strong connections with their local community and a range of community organisations.

### **SUGGESTED STRATEGIES**

#### **To support the *School to Work Program***

Regions establish strong communication structures with community, business partners and networks. These will provide expanded learning environments for students to test career ideas and experience workplace expectations for students most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment.

Suggested strategies may include:

- building or expanding community and industry partnerships so that schools remain well informed about local employment, education and training opportunities
- identifying opportunities for parents/carers to be informed 'career partners' to their 15-19 year olds, in particular for parents/carers of students most at risk of disengaging from school
- working with parents and their community groups to identify cultural values and expectations that impact on students' career perceptions to inform targeted strategies that will empower and enable successful career and transition planning
- working collaboratively with the local education, community and industry groups including government agencies, to identify opportunities and initiatives that will provide students at risk with real life experiences that build confidence and expand their personal career ideas
- using business, community and education partners to identify a pool of willing career role models for students as well as mentors, career partners and industry speakers
- supporting schools to provide students with enterprise and community learning opportunities

- helping students see the importance of building their own personal networks and connections to help them and their peers to gain employment and source opportunities.

### **To support Professional Learning**

Regions provide professional learning opportunities for teachers, school executive and regional consultancy on the development of educational practices that result in strengthened partnerships with the local community to support Stage 5 and 6 students most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment.

Suggested strategies may include:

- training for key school personnel to identify potential connections with government and non-government organisations to support Stage 5 and 6 students most at risk of leaving school early
- supporting interagency networks to enhance school community partnerships with the focus on Stage 5 and 6 students
- sharing effective practice using regional communication networks
- providing personalised support by implementing a structured mentoring program for the most at risk Stage 5 and 6 students.

### **Suggested evidence of the impact of regional support to encourage highly connected relationships**

- New and strengthened community partnerships to support Stage 5 and 6 students most at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment
- Increased parent participation and collaborative involvement as informed 'career partners' to students in schools
- New and strengthened business partnerships to provide increased support for students at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment e.g. through enterprise learning opportunities
- Increased levels of support and connection to the local community as a result of mentoring programs
- Increased access to local, employment data, career information, and government employment projections related to future planning
- Increased regional brokering and publicising of opportunities for Regional Industry Careers Advisers (RICAs) to inform schools and parents of up-to date industry and employment data

- Regions strategically expanding the range of partnerships with business, industry, agencies and the community to support 15-19 year old students at risk to be more strongly connected to their community and to participate in an expanding network of support structures and contacts in their community
- Regions support schools to skill 15-19 year old students at risk to make connections with others and community organisations so they can help themselves and others to gain work and access opportunities in their community.

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NSW Department of Education and Training  
Level 14  
1 Oxford Street  
DARLINGHURST NSW 2010

[www.det.nsw.edu.au](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au)

