

Career education: What do students want?

Understanding the needs of students in developing a quality school career education plan is essential for schools.

In a survey of 400 Australian secondary students in Years 10, 11 and 12, quality career education was identified as being of high importance or important to them. The majority of students indicated they are seeking information and advice from a variety of sources and are looking for career guidance from the career adviser to help them with their career decision making.

Year 10 students indicated that they have a desire for more information from such sources as career expos, open days, guest speakers and information sessions and a need for more information regarding courses, post-secondary education and careers to assist them in their decision making.

Year 11 and 12 students shared the same overall desire for accessing and receiving more information. Additionally, Year 12 students indicated a desire for access to a career adviser for more in-depth and targeted counselling in the way of information and advice and a desire for work experience.

Students who responded that they did not believe career education to be very important at this time, indicated it will become important at some point. Students recognise that career education may become a priority in the future.

Providing a quality career education plan that helps students and parents to see that career development is a life-long process rather than a 'stage' or single decision that needs to be made may help to engage students in the continual process of career development.

When asked who they feel most comfortable discussing their career options with, students rated parents highest followed by a career adviser, friends, teachers and other people they know and trust.

As students age they move beyond their parents and friends and look to alternative sources for career-related information such as someone working in the industry and career advisers.

It is important to examine how to provide parents with the proper information and knowledge to best assist their child in their career development.

Students and parents positively rated receiving regular email updates containing career information from the school career adviser. Career advisers also indicated the use of email was an efficient way of disseminating information to all students.

The outcomes of discussions with students about what their needs are in relation to career education in school suggest the need for a comprehensive career curriculum. Qualified career advisers would provide specific career information and support tailored to students' developmental levels.

Educating parents and peers on how best to support students during their career development, involving industry where appropriate, would be helpful to students throughout their career development and decision making processes.

