Pathways to Futures

Options to Improve Post Compulsory Pathways and Transitions

Office of Learning and Teaching

2006
1. The Importance of Pathways and Transitions

The Government’s goals and aspirations for Victoria’s young people are clearly set out in the *Growing Victoria Together* statement, which contains two goals that are particularly relevant to post compulsory education and training:

- By 2010, 90% of young people in Victoria will successfully complete Year 12 or its educational equivalent.
- That the number of early school leavers who are unemployed after six months will decline.

These goals are backed by strong evidence that completing Year 12 or its equivalent is a strong foundation for future success in education, training, employment and other areas. The *On Track* survey confirms that young people who have completed Year 12 or equivalent are more likely to enter further education, training or full-time employment than those who have not completed.

2. A Shared Responsibility

The post compulsory years are a time when young people begin to take a range of pathways through education, training, employment and other activities. There is an increased risk that some young people will ‘fall through the cracks’ between education and training providers and other services, and not get the help they need. Ensuring smooth transitions, especially for those who are at risk of not making a successful transition, is a shared responsibility.

Schools have a critical role to play for their students, but are not expected to discharge this role alone. They should be working in close partnership with other schools, training providers, employers, community groups and Local Learning and Employment Networks to improve transitions for all young people in their local area.

3. The Role of Schools

The School Accountability and Improvement Framework describes the expectations placed on Victorian government schools. The Framework has a clear focus on improving student outcomes through continuous school improvement.

The framework defines three broad areas of student outcomes:

- Student learning.
- Student pathways and transitions.
- Student engagement and wellbeing.

School Strategic Plans and Annual Implementation Plans need to describe what a school is aiming to achieve, and what it will do achieve its aims, in all three areas.

This document focuses on ways in which schools can improve student pathways and transitions in the post compulsory years. However, all three areas are closely linked, and successful pathways and transitions are partly the result of high levels of learning, engagement and wellbeing throughout a student’s time at school.
4. Tools and Options for Schools

There are a range of ways in which schools can seek to improve student outcomes in the area of pathways and transitions. This document examines these under three headings:

- Broadening provision.
- Transition support.
- External partnerships.

4.1 Broadening Provision

In Victoria, there are a range of education and training options available to students in the immediate post compulsory years. There are three senior secondary certificates accredited by the Victorian Qualifications Authority for delivery in Victorian schools:

- The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).
- The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).
- The International Baccalaureate Diploma Program.

Ensuring that the offerings available to students match their needs, aspirations and preferred learning styles is important to achieving improved student outcomes in the senior secondary years. Schools are encouraged to review their offerings in the light of their knowledge of their students, informed by data such as the results of the On Track survey and the information on student aspirations collected through the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) program. More information on On Track is available at [http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/voced/ontrack/default.htm](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/voced/ontrack/default.htm).

Schools can further broaden the options available to their students through partnerships with other schools, TAFE Institutes and other providers of vocational education and training and adult community education.

**Using the Victorian Certificate of Education**

All government secondary schools in Victoria deliver the VCE, which provides a great deal of flexibility to include units that will meet the needs of students at a particular school. There are more than 90 studies available, including vocational education and training (VET) units.

Schools are encouraged to ensure that their VCE offerings match the needs of their students and are contributing to student outcomes. There may also be scope to further broaden provision through arrangements with other schools, TAFE Institutes and other providers of vocational education and training.


**The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning**

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a hands-on option for students in Years 11 and 12. The VCAL provides practical work-related experience, as well as literacy and numeracy skills and the opportunity to build personal skills that are important for life and work. A VCAL program includes units from four compulsory strands – literacy and numeracy, industry specific skills, work related skills and personal development.

VCAL is an increasingly popular option in Victorian schools, with over 12,000 enrolments in 2006. It gives schools the capacity to offer programs suited to students who have a preference for applied learning.

The International Baccalaureate Diploma

The International Baccalaureate Diploma program was accredited as a senior secondary certificate by the Victorian Qualifications Authority in 2006, and has been offered in some Victorian non-government schools for some time. Following this decision, the Minister for Education and Training issued guidelines for Victorian government schools wishing to offer this program.


The Role of Non-School Providers

Although most young people complete Year 12 or its equivalent in schools, large numbers also complete through TAFE and adult community education (ACE) providers, and many others will have some of their education program delivered by these providers while they are still at school. Both the VCE and VCAL are widely provided in TAFE and ACE.

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* provides for a guaranteed place in a TAFE Institute or other public training provider for young people who have not completed Year 12 or equivalent. The Victorian Government’s skills statement, *Maintaining the Advantage*, provided funding of $28 million to make this a reality. This guarantee will make it easier for young people who are better suited to a TAFE pathway to undertake education and training in TAFE.

In planning provision and seeking partnerships in their local areas, schools will need to be increasingly aware of the type and amount of provision occurring in TAFE and ACE, and to look for opportunities to minimise duplication and develop programs that allow young people to undertake education and training that meets their needs.

Technical Education Centres

Another development that has broadened the options for young people in the post compulsory years is funding for four Technical Education Centres in the Victorian Government’s Skills Statement *Maintaining the Advantage*. Technical Education Centres will be new highly recognisable and distinctive facilities linked to TAFE Institutes. They will provide:

- cutting edge facilities in areas of local industry priority for established and emerging industries,
- high quality and industry relevant teaching,
- environments appropriate for young people, and
- strong links to local industry.

*Maintaining the Advantage* announced funding for four Centres – at Ballarat, Wangaratta, Heidelberg and Berwick. In addition, the Holmesglen Vocational College will operate on a similar model. These Centres will improve opportunities for collaboration between schools and TAFE Institutes to deliver VET to young people of senior secondary age.

Other models of collaboration are also emerging, including co-location of TAFE and school facilities and joint use of facilities

4.2 Transition Support

Providing a broad range of educational pathways is important in improving student outcomes. However, young people may require assistance to navigate the options available to them and fit them into a longer-term career plan. There are a range of programs and tools available to schools to assist them to support students in their transitions.
Careers and Transitions in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards describe what is essential for students to achieve from Years Prep to 10 in Victorian schools. They provide a whole school curriculum planning framework that sets out learning standards for schools to use to plan their teaching and learning programs, including assessment and reporting of student achievement and progress.

Under the Standards, Year 9 to 10 are seen as a stage of ‘developing pathways’. Students are increasingly developing the skills to effectively participate in their communities and workplaces. The earlier stages of the development of these skills are also included in the Standards for earlier stages of learning. The Standards provide an opportunity to integrate self-knowledge, understanding of the world of work and career development skills in the curriculum. If this is done successfully, students will enter the post compulsory years with a greater capacity to manage their own successful transitions to further education and training and into the workforce.


Managed Individual Pathways

The Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) initiative ensures that all students 15 years and over in government schools are provided with individual pathway plans, with associated support as a means to continued education, training or full-time employment.

MIPs aims to help young people to:

• make a smooth transition from compulsory schooling to further education, training and employment;
• develop skills to manage their pathways throughout their working lives; and
• develop their knowledge, understanding and experience of opportunities in education, training and employment.

Additional support is provided to students at risk of disengaging or not making a successful transition to further education, training or secure employment. Students participating in Youth Pathways programs in TAFE institutes or Adult and Community Education institutions also have pathways plans.

More information on MIPs is available at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/careersandtransition/mips/default.htm. This includes examples of good practice that may assist schools to make better use of the program.

Careers and Transitions Resources

A number of resources are available to support young people, parents and teachers in exploring career options and building career development skills. More information is available at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/careersandtransition/default.htm. This site is being expanded, and contains links to other resources, including the national myfuture website and the Real Game set of resources for students of all ages.

The Youth Transition Support Initiative

In May 2006, the Victorian Government announced funding of $10 million over four years for transition workers to assist young people aged 15 to 19 years who have disengaged from education, training and employment to navigate existing government services and education and training opportunities. Schools will be a major source of referrals for these workers, who will concentrate on young people who have been out of education and training for at least six months.
This initiative was announced as part of the Government’s Social Policy Action Plan A Fairer Victoria, which is at http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/CA256D8000265E1A/page/Listing-Home+Page+News-A+Fairer+Victoria+-+The+Victorian+Government%27s+social+policy+action+plan!OpenDocument. Further details of the initiative will be announced during 2006.

### 4.3 External Partnerships

Young people making the transition from school to work can benefit from support from a wide range of sources. Schools have an important role to play, but are able to draw on support from other organisations and programs.

**Local Learning and Employment Networks**

Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) bring together education providers, industry, community organisations, individual and government organisations to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people in communities across Victoria.

Membership of a Local Learning and Employment Network is drawn from any individual or organisation with an interest in post compulsory education, training and employment within the area covered by that LLEN. The membership profile of each LLEN varies. LLENs are incorporated associations managed through a Committee of Management. The Committee of Management is representative of the wider membership.

Most secondary schools should already be active members of their local LLEN. LLENs are able to provide assistance in developing relationships with other organisations involved in young people’s education, training and transitions, and in brokering local initiatives designed to improve transitions.


**Career Advice Australia**

Career Advice Australia is the Australian Government’s set of career initiatives. Initiatives include:

- Local Community Partnerships, which can assist with Structured Workplace Learning, Career and Transition Support and the Adopt a School program.
- Initiatives aiming to improve the professional standards of careers advisors.
- National networks of industry-based careers advisors.
- The Youth Pathways program, which provides intensive assistance to young people aged 13-19 who are at risk of not making a successful transition.


### 5. Conclusion

The School Accountability and Improvement Framework makes clear the responsibility of schools to pay attention to student pathways and transitions. Improving pathways and transitions in the post compulsory years is a complex undertaking, as students find their individual pathways and move into a diverse and constantly changing landscape of education, training and employment options.
To meet these challenges, schools are encouraged to think broadly about what they are able to provide to their students, to make use of the programs and resources available, and to partner with external organisations who can assist them to reach shared goals.

Capital investment can play a part in schools’ plans to improve student pathways and transitions. The Building Futures policy has been developed to guide investment in Victorian school infrastructure. It aims to ensure that expenditure on educational assets generates significant gains in educational outcomes.

Under the Building Futures policy, capital investment, including for school reorganisations, will need to demonstrate a strong educational rationale. There are already a number of examples where communities have reorganised educational provision to provide a broader range of options and pathways. Examples are available on the Building Futures website at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/buildingfutures/.

The options outlined in this document are some of the major, statewide initiatives that are available in this area. There are many other options, and effective local initiatives are constantly being developed. The quality of relationships at the local level, and the capacity of all players to work together in support of young people, will be the major sources of further improvement in the transitions made by young Victorians.