

From School to Success: Supporting increased school completion and positive post-school pathways

Webinar Q&A

Q: Where can I get a copy of the PET research report?

A: The report is available at <https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/media/research/reports/experiences-of-early-school-leavers>

Q: How do we stop young people ‘falling through the gaps’ when they are not engaged in school. Many struggle to fit into an adult learning environment. Structured work placement with a real opportunity for paid employment would be a possible pathway but how would it be funded.

A: Great question. If students are not engaged, this itself would be a flag, and ideally there would be even earlier indicators of students becoming disengaged. As for funding work placements this is one of the big questions that the panel might have insights on. Structured work placements facilitated through schools could also act as a hook for disengaged students.

Q: Thanks for this fabulous research. Does your data also allow you to say more about differences between groups of early school leavers, for example based on gender or regionality?

A: We can look at some of this, for example, males are more likely to leave school early for those pull factors, but of course, it can be mixed.

Q: Interested to hear views on the role of families and what home life plays in supporting young people to remain at school. From parents with English as a second language unable to support their children’s schooling, young people encouraged to leave school early to support families through to home not being safe. As there are challenges at schools - thinking there are challenges at home not supportive of young people remaining at school.

A: This is certainly a complexity, particularly when family has such a strong influence on the decisions young people are making. This challenge speaks to the supports that young people require both in and outside of schools - from government agencies, business, and non-profits, and the information that parents themselves need to support their children to positive post-school pathways. In terms

of the PET research, the young people we spoke to had the broad support of their families to make the best decisions for their circumstances.

Q: Anthony's comments about networks are interesting when contrasted with Anne's comment about the quality of information provided by family, friends and relatives. Research for rich countries with formal labour markets suggests that personal networks (family, kin, friends) are associated with worse labour market outcomes, but formal networks like career guidance and formal mechanisms more generally are associated with higher quality employment outcomes. Networks and good information are not equally accessible.

A: This concurs with what young people have told us in the PET research, where the quality of information provided by those in the networks is quite variable. Certainly this is a case where quality is often more important than quantity.

Q: What are the data (existing or needed) that might help inform the transition pathways needed to help early school leavers and young people foundational skills and re-engaged?

A: The PET research report mentioned above has a range of insights from early school leavers that can help inform how these young people can be better supported. Broader research indicates that some young people, and early school leavers in particular, can leave school without the literacy and numeracy skills that they need to engage in study and work post-school. There are plenty of early indicators (attendance and achievement are just two that we looked at) that would signal which students are likely to struggle and disengage from school, but the matter of having a plan and the resources to respond to those indicators is not insignificant.

Q: Are there differences across different disadvantaged/ challenged groups such as refugee/ migrant students with language challenges/ low SES or other types?

A: In the PET research, we do find some differences in those post-school outcomes by these type of factors. As Anne mentioned in the data, the best signals are those related to how students are going at school some years prior, which also vary by those demographic factors.

Q: A review of the education system in Tasmania has recently been announced. What advice would you give those involved with the review?

A: There have been a number of reviews in the education space, including recently a national review. Starting with what we already know, what the evidence tells and then hearing from those on the ground about what should change would be a useful start.

Q: Student Support Officer (SSO) roles were rolled out in NSW public high schools in 2020. One of their focus areas is supporting students with pathways and transition to adulthood. They also act as linkers of schools with external services. Considering the fact that Career Advisors' workload is mostly very heavy, would your organisation be willing to partner with SSOs in this regard? Have you experienced collaborating with SSOs?

A: The Smith Family has had a range of conversations with DoE staff regarding work underway. We're very open to partnering with organisations where we have capacity, capability and it aligns with our purpose.

Q: As a University who does School Visits, should we be putting a more personalised and skill set spin on our presentations rather than course pathways and putting a focus on earlier years (year 7 - 9) prior to subject selections so they can make a decision based on subjects they are good at and enjoy?

A: What young people told us throughout the PET research is that they want more information about the variety of options that are available to them, and to get an idea of what different jobs/careers involve (including the skills required and provided). With that lens, a great starting point is to get in earlier, as you suggest, so that young people can start to understand what they might like to do, and what they need to do to get there, rather than starting with the different courses that are on offer.

Q: TAFEs are described as "adult learning environments" however under 18 year olds can enrol as it is a post-year 10 option in Tasmania. How can TAFEs help young people make an informed decision. Particularly for those who are looking at TAFE because they don't like school or report being bullied.

A: TAFEs are an important pathway here. Expanding those career supports that many schools have available into TAFEs, to acknowledge that some young people at TAFE may not have a clear idea of what they want to do, would be an excellent resource!

Q: Is there a role for industry and professional organisations to play in the education and engagement of students to assist them gain knowledge of the career options?

A: Very much so, given the importance of exposing young people to the world of work while they're *at school* is critical to supporting them to stay engaged in school and have a positive post-school pathways. Schools are very busy places so working with organisations, for example with not-for-profits who already have partnerships with schools around strengthening educational and careers support would be a good place to start.