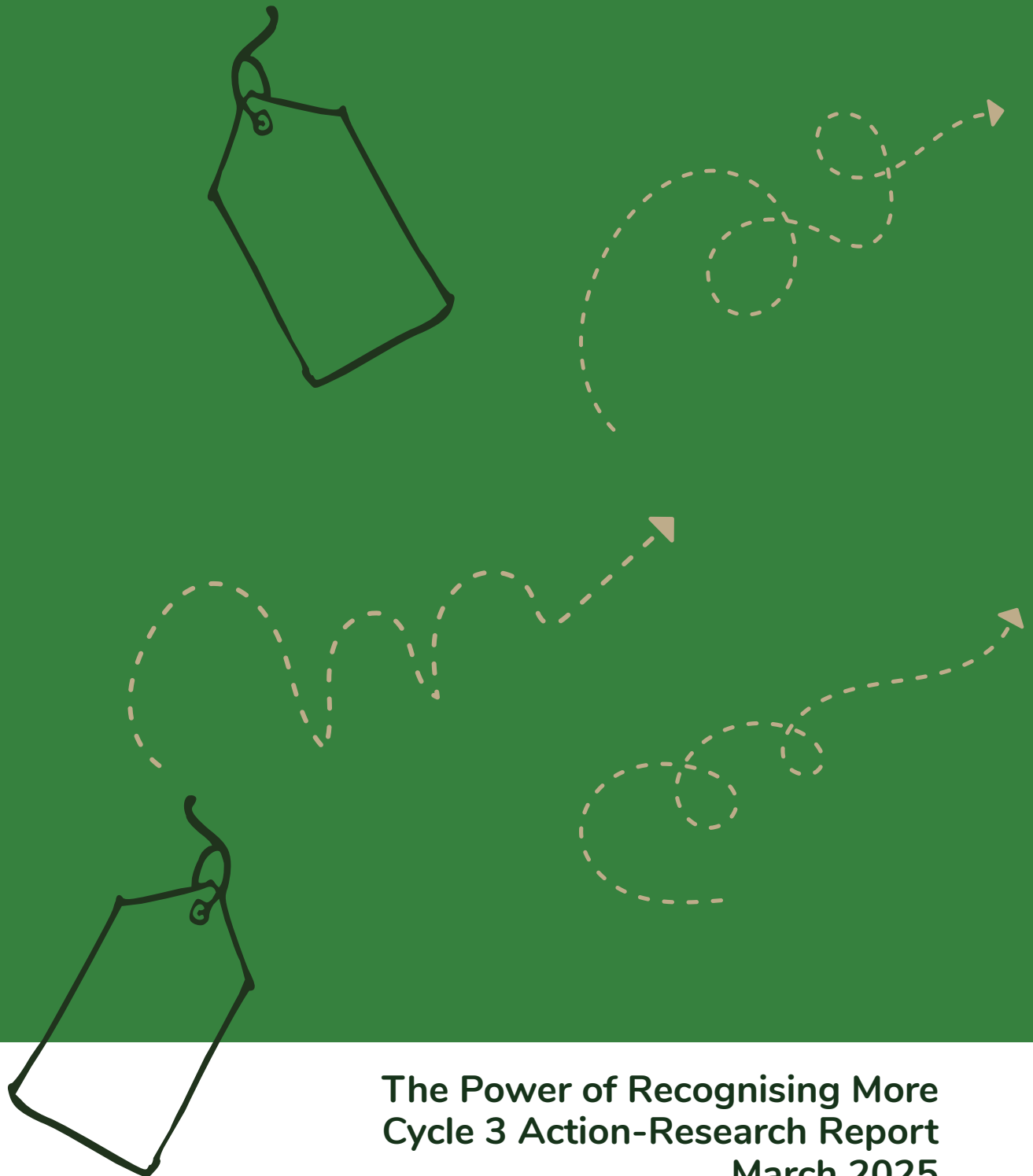


Notes from the field

The vital role of trust
and agency – building
capabilities and improved
learning pathways



The Power of Recognising More
Cycle 3 Action-Research Report
March 2025

Contents

The Power of Recognising More is a three-year participatory action-research study (2023–2025) designed to explore how broader recognition of learning success can support the equitable transformation of education in Australia.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land throughout Australia who have been learning and educating on Country for over a thousand generations.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to live in spiritual and sacred relationships with Australia.

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Contributions, sense-making and research design in collaboration with:

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Introduction

It is widely agreed that young people need to be prepared with a mix of knowledge, cognitive skills, and social and emotional skills to learn well and successfully transition from school to further education, work, and adulthood.¹ These skills are vital to young people's wellbeing and personal development, their academic success and their ability to contribute to society at large.

Yet too many young people are simultaneously bored, disengaged and overwhelmed² by their schooling experiences, and are facing a range of learning challenges which, combined with increasing mental ill-health, can seriously impact their capacity to learn well, contribute and thrive.^{3,4}

And, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are much more likely to disengage from mainstream education. For many years there have been two-track solutions that isolate and sideline young people experiencing vulnerability. These 'alternatives' are also, in varying ways, often inaccessible to many who could benefit from them.

In response, leading education practitioners across Australia are embracing methods of broader recognition of learning success, driven by their understanding of the profound impact it can have on young people. Recognising the whole learner does more than improve learning outcomes – it can reduce stigma, highlight the strengths cultivated through challenges, and provide a platform for ownership and accountability in learning.

These leaders recognise that focusing on skills and capabilities – beyond traditional academic measures – can empower students to see their potential, build confidence, and open pathways to further learning and meaningful work.

Young people are naturally curious and eager to learn, especially about what matters to them. They want opportunities to explore their interests, collaborate in creating knowledge and experiences, and express themselves in ways that highlight their unique strengths and identities.

In today's digital age, where so much knowledge can be found at your fingertips, it is these unique human differences that will set young people up for success.

There is a growing shift away from only relying on standardised definitions of learning and success, and instead valuing personalised, self-directed, and creative ways for young people to engage with their education and the world around them.

This desire for a new approach is sparking a gradual transformation in education.

Cycle 3 design

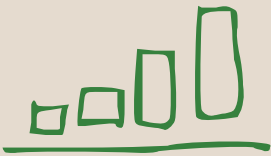
Over the past two years *The Power of Recognising More* study has collaborated with hundreds of schools, system leaders, admission bodies and tertiary providers, and worked with thousands of learners to understand this transformation - guided by a consistent group of design partners, shaping its focus, direction, and outcomes.

Together we've been exploring and seeking to understand what is working, how students and teachers are benefiting, what is getting in the way and where we need to learn and do more.

This Cycle, the third in the series, builds on the work of Cycle 1 and 2, bringing together leading practitioners to delve deeper into how broader learning recognition success impacts students, schools, and systems.

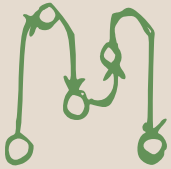
The Power of Recognising More is focused on three overarching research questions:

- **Impact on young people:** What impact does broader recognition of learning have on the educational experience of young people, and their pathways to further learning and work?
- **School arrangements:** What arrangements need to be in place to enable equitable broader learning recognition approaches?
- **System enablers and barriers:** What conditions in the learning system are enabling (or preventing) broader learning recognition?



Methodology

Cycle 3 approach: “Notes from the field”



These notes from the field were brought together over six months in 2024 to capture how schools and communities (in some cases as large as jurisdictions) are testing and trialling new approaches to the broader recognition of learning success within their places. They are written from the collective perspective of the practitioners who have contributed to this Cycle.

Three specific areas of inquiry were determined through a collaborative co-design process with the project design partners, guiding Cycle 3:

- 1. Learner Agency** - This focus area examined the relationship between agency and positive school experiences. Participants explored what learner agency looked like in practice, how it could be supported for all students, and how schools could scaffold agency across diverse profiles and age groups.
- 2. Trust in Complex Capabilities** - Recognising and assessing complex capabilities, such as collaboration and problem-solving, requires robust and trusted methods. Participants explored how trust could be built among educators, employers, and other stakeholders to ensure these capabilities were valued and utilised.

3. Pathway Decisions - This area investigated the impact of broader recognition on young people’s ability to make informed choices about education and career pathways. Key questions included how students developed confidence in articulating their capabilities and navigating complex options for their futures.

Drawing on evidence and insights from the diverse contributions, these field notes highlight challenges faced, and progress made among localised innovations - whether in pedagogy, student engagement, or community collaboration - and represent vital live experiments in shifting practice. They document what is being learned in these diverse contexts, offering insights into what works, what doesn’t, and the conditions that enable equitable change. These efforts create space for alternative models to emerge, take root, and evolve.

They integrate local and international evidence, together with the lived experience of young people and leading practitioners and highlight lessons learned and progress made, and opportunities for future progression to accelerate the transformation.

By sharing these experiences, we hope these field notes help translate local innovation into actionable knowledge, demonstrating how change at the level of place can influence and ultimately reshape the broader system.

Huddles



Cycle 3 adopted a highly collaborative approach, which we termed ‘huddles’. Huddle participants were practitioners (including design partners and other contributing partners) and each huddle engaged its participants in iterative and action-oriented discussions to generate meaningful insights.

20 partners made submissions of information and data from their work that was relevant to one or more of these three huddles. The Learning Creates Australia team also took notes from the huddle discussions, and gathered a range of relevant research documents available online. Nous undertook analysis of the partner submissions and the huddle discussion notes and Learning Creates analysed the initial set of research documents against the research domain.

The huddle process was as follows:

Kick-Off Sessions

Each focus area began with a collaborative session where participants refined research questions and identified strategies for gathering insights - setting the direction.

Progress Check-Ins

Throughout the cycle, participants engaged in regular updates to share progress, address challenges, and refine their approaches. These check-ins fostered collaboration and ensured the work stayed on track.

Synthesis Discussions

As insights were gathered, participants reconvened to synthesise findings, identify emerging themes, and develop recommendations. This process helped transform raw data into actionable knowledge.

Final Submissions

Participants submitted their findings, including case studies, evaluations, and reports, contributing to a growing evidence base for broader learning recognition.

Sensemaking Workshop

Key findings were shared and analysed in a workshop with huddle participants and design partners to align insights and determine wider implications.

Reporting and Reflection

The cycle concluded by summarising the insights and lessons learned into these field notes - contributing to the study’s broader objectives.



CAPABILITIES

Young people want to be recognised for their unique skills and capabilities. In an era of AI, where information is at our fingertips, young people need to know more than facts and to demonstrate more than foundation skills. They need innately human capabilities, in collaborating, critical reasoning and creativity – to name a few.^{5,6,7}

Just building these capabilities, though crucial, isn't enough

These capabilities are imperative for wellbeing, to build connections with each other, schools and communities.^{8,9} Employers are also looking for people with these skills, who can work well together, adapt to change, and come up with new solutions.^{10,11,12}

Just building these capabilities, though crucial, isn't enough. Young people need to have the language to talk about them in ways that others can understand, especially when it comes to things like job interviews and tertiary applications.

This is particularly true for disadvantaged young people, whose complex lives often provide them with a vast array of experiences and capabilities. Without the guidance they may not recognise how valuable their skills are or how to use them to chart their post school pathways.

Leading schools are finding ways to help students develop and recognise these skills, giving them the confidence to express themselves and talk about what they can do. This all comes down to trust – trusting young people, listening to them, and giving them the responsibility to figure out their own path, with a little guidance along the way.

There's also growing evidence that giving schools more flexibility in how they teach can help students develop these essential skills for the future.¹³

This all comes down to trust – trusting young people, listening to them, and giving them the responsibility to figure out their own path

Shared perspectives

Schools are trying out different ways to include these broader skills in their curriculum, assessments, and career planning. They're also working on building trust between students, parents, teachers, and employers.

“We have our school staff and largely our parent body on board with this... Students in our school are on board with the principle but concerned that the metrics match the requirements for future pathways (for our students this is mostly employment or TAFE, apprenticeships). Getting employers on board is occurring at small scale – the conditions that really enabled this was labour shortages.”

For some schools incorporating capabilities, alongside traditional measures, has been well accepted:

“When we've communicated about complex capabilities to parents in our school, we've observed that they are secure with the concept of acknowledging the whole child, but along with the ATAR/ graded subjects.”

For others, there's still some hesitation and worry that focusing on these skills is just a trend:

“Generally, we are a forward thinking school, however we have not yet managed this to involve the whole school. The system that includes schools themselves has to have trust that this will not be fleeting.”

Leading practitioners are trying to figure out what skills are in demand and important for supporting young people's next steps and how these might differ across place and contexts.

"I wish I knew that the universities and employers/ industry are buying into this and also enthusiastic about the prospect of better matching careers and pathways to student's strengths."

"What are the different capabilities for different communities that have the most meaning - and is this useful?"

Some schools are worried that assessing these skills will be a lot of extra work and won't be fair for everyone. Others are part of networks that help them figure out how to do it.

Schools also want to know how recognising these broader skills is lifting student outcomes.

This field note uses what we're hearing from students and huddle partners to show how they're developing and assessing these skills, what's working, and what we need to explore next.

Lessons from our practice

Complex capabilities can look and feel different in different places. They depend on what's important to a particular student or community. Experiences both in and out of school help students build these skills.

Relationships matter

Real-world experiences help young people see how their learning connects to life outside of school and give them a chance to show what they can do.

Huddle partners talk about those "aha" moments when students really understand themselves - maybe it's through running a coffee cart or talking to a mentor in their field of interest. These experiences shape how young people see themselves and what they want to be.

Cycle 2 of the action research revealed that young people also agree it makes a difference when teachers and other important people in their lives really know them:

"I was recently recognised by my mentor and surf club. They referred me to people at Bells Beach Pro because I love photography...I got to go into the water with all the pro's.....I got recognised [for my photography] and it was the best thing ever."

But when young people's skills aren't recognised, they can feel like they don't belong or that school isn't for them:

"I think not so much being recognised for what I'd achieved because it felt very external to the system. So I understand that they probably really didn't know that I had capabilities."

But providing more opportunities for kids like me, who had all these experiences in different areas, other than, just, you know, going to school and doing well in your essays and your tests and stuff."⁴⁴

Different capabilities for different communities

While some skills are important for everyone, others depend on the situation. What matters to one person or community might not be the same for another.

The **National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition** (NIYEC) shows how Indigenous definitions of success focus on interconnected outcomes and emphasise social and emotional wellbeing.

Schools are open to new approaches when they see how they fit with their community's values and needs, rather than being forced on them.

Some young people, especially those facing tough situations, develop a wide range of skills just by dealing with adult-like responsibilities at a young age.

Tools can help

Schools are using different tools to capture and showcase a range of skills.

At **Rooty Hill High School**, students have personalised learning plans, and in the senior school, the school is exploring the use of learner profiles and portfolios that show what they know and can do. They can use these profiles for job applications or tertiary study admissions.

As part of a pilot program, the **SACE Board** is also using Learner Profiles, and they're making sure students have ownership of their profiles and can include information that shows their full range of achievements.

Young people like that these profiles show all their hard work and accomplishments, not just their grades. This is especially important for young people who are more focused on vocational training or apprenticeships, or engaged in caring roles, or part-time work.

Some schools are worried that assessing these skills will be a lot of extra work

Real-world experiences help young people see how their learning connects to life outside of school

While some skills are important for everyone, others depend on the situation

Bottom up - top down approaches

Different states and territories have different approaches to recognising these skills, from Student Achievement Profile Summaries in Victoria to Learner Profiles in South Australia.

In South Australia, schools have been given more flexibility in how they teach the curriculum, and teachers are trusted to deliver it in ways that work for their students.

Other schools are working on their own or in networks to assess and recognise these skills in a way that prepares students for life after school.

Building trust is key

It's important that everyone – students, teachers, parents, communities, employers, and colleges – understands and values these broader skills.

Leading schools are building trust by helping students share their learning with their families and communities and by celebrating a wide range of achievements.

The growth in alternative pathways to tertiary education are also showing that these broader skills are valuable.



Fieldwork examples

It is important that all children and young people have a fair chance to complete their education. This means making sure all students, no matter their background, have the chance to learn and grow including access to different programs and opportunities.



ShoreTrack is an example of a transformational program working to support young people who are struggling in school or thinking about dropping out by giving them hands-on experiences and building their confidence and capability.¹⁵

Melbourne Metrics provides schools with assessment and reporting tools and resources – including an online assessment and credentialing platform, professional development, partnership engagements and support – making it easier for teachers to provide rich and diverse opportunities for learners to develop and demonstrate a broad range of competencies.

ShoreTrack

ShoreTrack is about hands-on learning for young people who might be at risk of falling behind or leaving school altogether. They offer a range of programs to help these young people build skills, feel more confident, and find a path towards education or training.

Real world experience is key

ShoreTrack's approach is based on experiential learning, with young people engaged in real-world, immersive experiences.

The young people in their program might have struggled in school and felt like they weren't good at learning. ShoreTrack gives them a chance to try new things, like:

- Learning vocational skills and trying out different trades
- Working in teams on real projects
- Getting work experience and connecting with industry professionals

The young people help design these experiences so they're tailored to their interests and needs, which helps them explore and get ready for life after school. They build all sorts of skills through these programs, both practical skills for specific jobs and broader skills like teamwork and problem-solving, all while working with mentors and industry experts.

Through this process, young people learn about different career paths and start to see themselves in a new light as they discover what they're good at and what they might enjoy doing.

Breaking down barriers

Even when these types of programs are free or low-cost, some young people might still have trouble participating. ShoreTrack helps by providing extra support, like meals, driving lessons, and transportation.

Building confidence and changing perspectives

Many young people who come to ShoreTrack have had negative experiences in school and might think they're not smart enough because they struggled with schoolwork.

But over time, their perspectives change, and they start to believe in themselves:

"You actually learn stuff. The main boss does a lot for us. He has taught me how to fix things. He's a good bloke. I don't just want to go to work. I want to go somewhere where you learn."

Part of this change comes from feeling safe and appreciated, and part of it comes from seeing themselves grow and learn new skills – they even start teaching others.

“I was a bit shy, but now I am more confident talking to people.”

Connections to community really matter. Young people have the chance to give back to their community, and locals have the opportunity to change their perceptions of young people’s capacity and capabilities. This, too, builds the young person’s feelings of belonging and value when transitioning into the workplace.

“Being at ShoreTrack has shown me that I can learn even though I don’t belong in school. I belong in my community and I can be whoever I want to be.”

ShoreTrack gives young people the power to choose what they want to learn and helps them build skills and capabilities for their future.

ShoreTrack gives young people the power to choose what they want to learn

Melbourne Metrics

Melbourne Metrics (MM) is an enterprise research unit within the University of Melbourne, supporting schools and schooling systems to recognise and assess the vital foundation learning competencies that students need to thrive in an uncertain world.

The MM team provides next-generation research-based transformative assessment tools, credentials and services, empowering systems and schools to assess and credential the complex competencies learners need for life. These broader skills and capabilities aren’t usually measured, and Melbourne Metrics is powering solutions globally.

Transforming assessment and credentialing at scale

Melbourne Metrics is supporting thousands of schools, school leaders and policy makers to transform their learning and assessment design through collaborative partnerships including the New Metrics initiative. They use the convening power of Melbourne University to engage with education systems and networks of schools locally and globally, providing next-generation assessment and credentialing tools and resources that capture and celebrate a broader profile of what young people know and can do.

Utilising digital tools and software to support teachers and learners

Ruby is a powerful cloud-based assessment platform developed by the University of Melbourne to support the assessment and validation of metrics in traditionally hard-to-measure areas of learning. Ruby has been made available to over 8500 schools and early childhood centres, assessing and tracking student learning data across a range of complex capabilities over time, producing a suite of reports for a variety of purposes, including reporting to parents and learner profiles.

Ruby leverages expert human judgments from across a learner’s educational program to assess growth in competence and represent what a learner knows and can do, calibrating their strengths against a common underlying currency.¹⁶

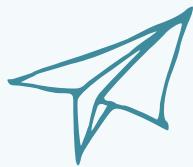
It is a world-class, research-based, strategic initiative of Melbourne Metrics supporting assessment, certification, moderation and credentialing of capability in high-stakes, standards-based but non-standardised, performance-oriented developmental assessment for a modern education. It provides assessment rigour and technical quality, and is built from years of research and project experiences.

Helping students get into university

Melbourne Metrics is also leading a research project to understand the utility of new metrics and learner profiles in tertiary admissions, helping better match students with their post-secondary pathways.¹⁷

Ruby leverages expert human judgments from across a learner’s educational program

Common barriers systems, schools and providers are facing



Fears that young people experiencing vulnerability will be further disadvantaged

A widespread concern often raised is that moving to recognition of broader capabilities including those built outside of core curriculum, might disadvantage some young people. As **Rooty Hill High School** showed, it is possible to draw on community and industry networks to support all students to build their capabilities and support their pathways.

Schools are telling us that more vulnerable students, especially those who are faring worse academically, welcome teachers focusing on them as whole learners rather than individual subject based recognition. They feel known, seen and recognised for their strengths:

“It makes me feel so much better, and it makes me feel like I’m valued, whereas before, I just didn’t feel anything for schooling because I felt like I was just there as another number.”¹⁸

Many teachers are reaping the benefits of this through increased learner engagement and satisfaction of knowing their students:

“[the approach] empowers me as her teacher to recognise what she is capable of doing beyond traditional assessments. It allows me to see her strengths in real-time and support her in ways that highlight her capabilities and build her confidence.”



Concerns that capabilities don't improve student outcomes or aren't valued by employers

Schools are continuing to work with communities, including parents, to explain why a broader focus including capabilities is important. For decades employers have been seeking employees that can collaborate with others, have good communication skills and are creative.¹⁹ These skills have supported young people to transition to employment, and a lack of knowledge of their capabilities has set young people experiencing vulnerability back.^{20 21} Employers, and our community at large, is increasingly reliant on people with well developed human skills^{22 23} whilst the global challenges our children are facing will require more than core knowledge to resolve. Whilst the school system is constructed around narrow measures of achievement, convincing parents of why capabilities are important is likely to remain a continual challenge.



Finding the right balance

Some schools report a desire to teach capabilities, but there is pressure from parents and the broader system to focus tightly on academic knowledge.

Evidence is emerging about how the dual focus on capabilities within deep disciplinary knowledge yields academic results, whilst real world learning can reinforce knowledge.

Schools with system support to broaden their focus are more easily able to try and test what works in their environment.

It would also be helpful to get families involved in conversations about capabilities

What is next?

There is ongoing work on how to measure and recognise these broader skills in a way that's useful for everyone, including students, teachers, employers and universities.

Right now, there are a lot of different ways that universities admit students, and it can be confusing and hard to keep track of. A more consistent approach that looks at these skills, like what **Melbourne Metrics** is exploring, could help make things easier.

It would also be helpful to get families involved in conversations about capabilities - some schools are trying this already but more action is needed systemically.

This would help families understand how recognising these skills can boost young people's confidence and sense of self, and to support the transition from school to future pathways.

Field notes:



PATHWAYS

Young people are voting with their feet, and seeking and accessing a broader range of pathways to education, training and employment.

Pathways start early on, with career exploration, vocational education, microcredentials, and real-world learning

A focus on capabilities helps young people to develop skills and attributes that support their learning and understanding of self, and to describe these in a manner that makes sense to others. This is a crucial foundation to navigate their future career.

Pathways start early on, with career exploration, vocational education, microcredentials, and real-world learning while still in school. Social and emotional learning also plays a big part in shaping pathways, helping young people develop skills like teamwork, collaboration, and resilience.

Young people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage have the most to gain from having access to different pathways, but just having more options after school isn't enough.

All young people need to access a range of experiences that help them understand potential careers and expand their networks. With a better understanding of themselves and tools like Mastery Transcripts and Learning Profiles, young people are looking for pathways that recognise everything they bring to the table.

Shared perspectives

Leading schools are creating pathways that fit their communities. They're working with local businesses and giving students time to learn outside the classroom, which helps them develop life skills, get part-time jobs, and explore potential careers.

Place-based examples include:

"Our students undertake weekly Structured Workplace Learning experiences, which provide them with an understanding of industry standards, as well as connections within their chosen industry."

Teachers are excited to be able to recognise all of a young person's experiences, including vocational education and training. Partnering with industry helps young people gain current, valuable skills and keeps schools up-to-date with the ever-changing world.

Schools are also noticing how giving students the freedom to explore and recognising their skills helps them understand themselves better:

"Understanding self is the foundation of careers education. If students understand themselves, their strengths, interests and skills then they can make sensible decisions about their future – including basic things like choosing the right subjects, engaging in a VET program etc. A successful experience in school can also build confidence beyond school."

Huddle partners are also working on making sure parents and students know about the many different and equally valuable pathways to reach the same goals. They're talking to parents about pathways to show them that different options are all good choices and can be safe for young people, changing their perspective from when parents themselves were in school.

Schools often share stories of students who didn't follow the traditional academic path but still found success in education and work.

These stories inspire other students and show everyone – students, parents, education providers, and employers – that there's more to a student than just their grades. They're building trust in alternative pathways, not as a backup plan, but as a personalised path that fits the student's needs.

This aligns with earlier research that found that parents often didn't know about different pathways but were the main source of advice for most young people.²⁴

Leading schools are creating pathways that fit their communities

Young people have confirmed how important it is for parents to be part of these discussions:

“It would be actually very powerful for students to come back as alumni and to talk about their journey for parents to hear about. That would be powerful for parents that ‘my kid will be ok’. Often parents have fears and they project that onto their children. I would love to hear from someone who has experienced and done it.”²⁵

Lessons from our practice

Broad networks are needed to support pathways planning.

Young people need to start exploring careers early on to understand the wide range of jobs out there, what they involve, and how they match up with their own skills and interests. Research shows it’s super important to help young people think about their futures.²⁶

Emerging evidence, supported in practice by many of the schools connected through the Huddles, show that helping young people explore their options is crucial.²⁷

Knowing how to navigate different pathways often depends on who you know, and young people usually only ask for advice from their parents, friends, and teachers.^{28,29}

Some young people, particularly young people experiencing vulnerability, may need more support to find and get involved in extracurricular learning, including exploring career pathways as work experience is often found through social networks.³⁰ However, these young people also have the most to gain from these experiences.

“One of the main things that can be improved is more teachers, more personalised experience; I don’t feel like I have a good grasp on what my options post-school are.”³¹

Leading schools are helping young people access different pathways by building partnerships with community organisations and industry. This is supporting young people to understand what it might take to transition to their chosen pathway.

“Conversations with mentors and ambassadors widened my knowledge and helped me understand what it takes to succeed.”

This matches up with earlier research that found that young people respond best to ‘warm knowledge,’ or advice from someone they know or who can relate to them, like a former student.³²

Recognising more opens more doors

We’re seeing that recognising a wider range of skills and achievements allows young people to explore more pathways. By trying new things, taking risks, and reflecting on their experiences, young people can better understand themselves, their strengths, and their interests. With this knowledge, they can set clearer goals.

Schools can help young people figure out what their next steps might be after school, including by showing them what the job market is like through work placements and providing guidance from trusted professionals.³³ Students in vocational programs usually have this built into their studies, but all young people need a variety of career exposures.

Young people have told us how valuable this type of learning would be:

“Experiential learning from early on – trade kids get to do this, like how they go to TAFE a day and see how it works. Pretty cool if they could customise each class to each kid, make kids’ lives easier.”

“An elective system that doesn’t mean choosing from options but creating them.”

At **Plumpton High School** this includes mock interviews and career path planning, whilst at **Carey Grammar** career planning has resulted in a four-fold (albeit off a low base) increase in students choosing vocational learning as their preferred post-school pathway.

These examples highlight how pathways planning is important to broaden options and challenge unhelpful stereotypes– often to university for students from higher socio-economic backgrounds or to TAFE or straight to work for young people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

Ambitions and engagement go hand-in-hand

Young people who have high ambitions for themselves are way more likely to be engaged in the classroom and have successful transitions after school.

Leading schools, like **Plumpton High School**, see this in action, with almost all of their students (97%) going on to employment, education, or training after graduation. They credit this success, in part, to their pathways initiatives.

Young people need to start exploring careers early on to understand the wide range of jobs out there

Knowing how to navigate different pathways often depends on who you know

... young people respond best to ‘warm knowledge,’ or advice from someone they know ...

Social and emotional skills help with engagement, academic outcomes and student wellbeing

Examples from schools that support young people facing tough situations reinforce this idea. These young people's perceptions of themselves change from negative to optimistic as they build and are supported to recognise their strengths and capabilities, both inside and outside of academic learning.

Broadening pathways supports social and emotional learning

Social and emotional skills help with engagement, academic outcomes and student wellbeing.³⁴

These skills are developed through structured activities, teaching, and reflection. Real-world learning experiences can build skills like teamwork and collaboration.

Research shows that being involved in extracurricular activities is good for social and emotional learning. However, without support, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to participate in these activities.³⁵

Some schools are actively working to close this gap, and students, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, are benefiting.

They are providing work-related skills that help young people get jobs while studying so they can be in control of their finances:

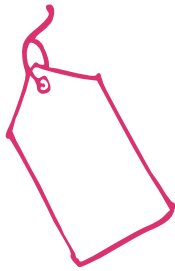
"Our school offers heaps of stuff like barista training, food handling, first aid... it's things like that which can make an actual difference."

These experiences also make school more relevant, especially for young people facing vulnerability who may be focused on the here and now and need to address more immediate, pressing needs.³⁶

Alternative pathways support young people experiencing vulnerability

There are lots of different ways to get into university now, including early admission offers based on a wide range of criteria. These pathways are opening doors to education by recognising a wider range of student capabilities, including supporting access for students with disabilities and students who might not do well on exams because of their life circumstances, but who otherwise do have the capabilities necessary to thrive in tertiary education.

Some students say they wouldn't have even considered university if they hadn't had access to early entry pathways. Students reported feeling more seen and valued when a broad range of factors were considered for entry.³⁷



Schools and education providers who participated in the Huddles are showing how alternative pathways support all children to engage in education, and can be transformative for young people experiencing vulnerability.

Plumpton High School

presents an example of school transformation delivering strong pathways outcomes for all students.

U@Uni shows how alternative university admissions can create success for a breadth of different student cohorts.

Plumpton High School

Plumpton High School has engaged in a whole school transformation which has focused on student leadership and agency, and includes a strong focus on pathways. School outcomes have transformed, from higher rates of university offers to lower suspensions and near universal post-school engagement.

Transforming pathways takes time, patience and data

Plumpton High School has invested significant time in building an evidence base to support their transformation. For over two years they collected and consolidated data to establish a shared understanding of what skills students require to be successful as global citizens.

They developed the Plumpton High School Student Executive Council (SEC) Leadership, Agency and Voice Framework, and an associated Exit Credential Transcript that all students receive each year. It drives entry to university, other higher education training and employment in concert with students' academic outcomes.

Broadening pathways helps outcomes for all students

Plumpton High School has supported all students to improve their outcomes by focusing on broader pathways and providing additional pathways support. The results have spoken for themselves - Almost all students are in employment, education or training compared to less than 75% across the local geography.

The results are not limited to improved pathways, with academic results improving too. Plumpton High School achieved its highest HSC results in 20 years in 2017, which they attribute to their cultural shift. 62 students in 2017, and many since have received early university offers. Average HSC marks also improved.

Pathways planning needs to be complemented by real world connections

Plumpton High School cites strong partnerships and connections as a key to their ability to support each student to pursue their pathway:

“We mentor in excess of 600 students each year through our Futures Centre with our sixty plus incredible business partners such as Western Sydney International Airport, Lend Lease, PVH, UBS, Citi Group, Optus, ABCN, The Beacon Foundation, Commonwealth Bank, United Way and many more.”

Young people benefit from support to help them navigate

Plumpton High School demonstrates that students benefit from wider resources, from resume planning to interview skills and techniques, mock interviews and access to broader insights.

Partnerships with LinkedIn support students to understand what skills they need to gain employment, and to undertake modules through LinkedIn to support their transition.³⁸

A transformed approach engages all students

Plumpton High School has experienced a turn around in school culture as young people are supported to locate and achieve their future goals.

Suspension rates at Plumpton have fallen during their transformation – halving from 2014-2024 with the total suspension days falling from 1,117 days in 2014 to 168 in 2024. This highlights the benefit of the transformation in particular for students most at risk of leaving education.

UTS U@Uni

UTS' U@Uni Academy Program has been designed as an alternate, non-ATAR entry pathway for students from a variety of local schools in low socio-economic areas. The program commences at the end of year ten, and provides on campus experiences, mentoring and tutoring. Over two years young people attend workshops, summer school and complete activities in seven areas – communication, collaboration, presentation, initiative, growth, reflection and information literate.³⁹

Demystifying university pathways through exposure

U@Uni demystifies university over an extended period of time, supporting young people to attend university and to try different disciplines. Ongoing connection to the university is secured through workshops, followed by tutoring and mentoring sessions to both support high school completion and help students to meet entry requirements for UTS. These are delivered by current UTS students, aligning with earlier evidence about the importance of warm advice through known connections.

Building and showcasing young people's capabilities to help them navigate

Throughout the program young people engage in experiential learning in a university setting, whilst building their capabilities across key areas. Young people have their capabilities recognised, both through formal badging and informal assessments pitching ideas to industry judges.

Providing skills to support successful transitions

The program is deliberately designed to build students' agency and confidence, enabling them to try different disciplines, to take risks and to get advice from peers. The learning program is designed to provide and reinforce academic skills. Students completing their HSC and making progress at U@Uni are able to receive a university offer.

Results show that U@Uni Academy students who've commenced at UTS are achieving success at the same level as low socio-economic students across the university sector nationwide.⁴⁰

... students benefit from wider resources, from resume planning to interview skills and techniques, mock interviews and access to broader insights

Ongoing connection to the university is secured through workshops, followed by tutoring and mentoring sessions

Ideas we need to challenge



Early entry is inequitable

Because early entry isn't based on a number or rank, some people think the schemes are unfair. However, early entry schemes have opened doors for young people who cannot see themselves entering university using a mainstream path. Students commented that early admission was "the linchpin in opening up new educational and career horizons, as well as a sense of recognition for their capabilities."⁴¹

Early entry can help break cycles of disadvantage for some young people whose circumstances may limit their capacity to perform well in an exam on a given day. It also enables some learners, such as carers, time to plan and save for the transition to university.⁴²



Young people have one chance to embark on a pathway

Schools are educating students and their parents about the changing labour market. Pathways, and careers, are no longer linear. To maintain a high-stakes, winner-takes-all approach to senior secondary runs contrary to the evolution of modern careers where young people will change roles, move in different directions, upskill and start again multiple times.



Early entry limits academic outcomes

Early entry has become controversial, with governments and some schools fearing students stop trying once they have an early offer. However there's little evidence for this. **Plumpton High School** found increases in early university offers can occur alongside improved academic outcomes. Interviews of students who received early offers confirm they feel less stressed but motivated to perform well in exams, most often because high performing students are more likely to apply for early entry. Similarly a longitudinal study found that early offers support students to feel academically buoyant, that is able to withstand challenges, but otherwise there is no impact on stress or academic outcomes.⁴³

Given this, there are no downsides, and potentially significant benefits, from early university offers.



Pathways alone are enough

Schools talk about the support young people need to understand what they might like to do next, and to locate and navigate pathways particularly when there are so many options. Young people rely on advice of trusted peers and adults.^{44 45 46} Teachers play a key role in supporting young people who may not have thought about university pathways to "locate information, answer questions, and ensure university applications like early entry were maximised to the benefit of the student."⁴⁷

What is next?

It's important to make alternative pathways accessible to everyone, and teachers, career advisors, and families need a better understanding of all the different options available.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds need strong support to explore opportunities. Schools, industry, and tertiary providers must work together in a structured, consistent way to connect students with real-world pathways that set them up for success.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular, need a strong support network

We must also break the stigma around these pathways. Choosing a non-traditional route is not about lacking ability - it's about finding the right fit and building on strengths. Sharing success stories can shift mindsets and show the real value of these options.

Field notes:

AGENCY

Agency is emerging as a vital component to system transformation. Engagement is falling across education, with levels of school attendance dropping in most communities but remaining far lower in communities experiencing disadvantage.⁴⁸

A powerful way to combat disengagement is to engage young people in learning that is meaningful to them. Students are more motivated when they have a say in their education.

Agency is key to connecting young people to education and to each other. It increases their engagement, belonging, wellbeing and understanding of themselves and others, as well as improves outcomes.

When young people play an active role in their learning they feel that it is relevant and meaningful.

They feel like they belong and are listened to, and that they have time and space to explore, to take risks and express themselves in authentic ways.^{49 50}

Shared perspectives

Our teachers and other education professionals are finding new ways to enable learner agency and help students feel ownership of their learning. They're designing lessons together with students and giving them space to explore, set goals, and follow their interests.

We've been meeting with these educators, interviewing them, collecting artefacts and evidence, and running workshops to figure out what's working and what challenges they're facing.

The journey isn't linear, and embedding learner agency is just one of many goals for these schools and systems.

Across schools, discussion centres on implementing agency in a way that supports all students to take agency:

"Giving appropriate differentiated tools on how to develop agency, what agency can look like in terms of inclusive education could be a broader approach with the agents/ team around the student and then measuring how comfortable the student is making these decisions."

Many teachers and school leaders talk about the need for system and school wide support:

"Whole school approach as above would need training and expertise in student driven approaches, also empowering the teachers to feel safe to trial and validate this work."

Some educators pointed to programs outside of the normal school day that are already doing a good job of giving students greater autonomy:

"I wonder if we can take note of other outside learnings, such as Duke of Ed and cadets etc. where there are short term interrelated subjects based on students interests and yet again modelling and teaching how agency can occur in bite size sections."

Agency is a key to connecting young people to education and to each other

Embedding learner agency is just one of many goals for these schools and systems

Lessons from our practice

All children possess agency from the beginning of their learning journey, expressing it through self-guided play, exploration, and experimentation.

As they grow, their capacity to exercise agency evolves, requiring age-appropriate opportunities to make choices, engage in decision-making, and shape their learning experiences.

However, as children start school, they are provided with more rules and formal instruction. Children can become less independent and more reliant on consistent guard rails. They are less able to freely explore, to try new things, take risks and experiment.

Giving students a sense of ownership over their learning doesn't just happen magically, especially if they're not used to it.

But agency can be taught, and active steps need to be taken to ensure that quiet voices who might be holding back, and disengaged young people who need to be found and re-engaged, are heard.

What is agency?

There are a wealth of definitions of agency, but the key essence relates to young people's sense of identity, belonging, initiative and activity.⁵¹

The OECD notes that choice, voice, and agency are similar and often used interchangeably. However they offer different levels of student autonomy and independence:

Choice falls within curriculum structures and may be from a limited set of options

Voice includes dialogue, discussion and consultation

Agency is based on a belief that young people can positively influence their lives and world and is based on setting goals and acting. In school this can include influencing content, pedagogy, assessment and reporting.⁵²

When we've talked to young people they've told us it is also about "ownership" – taking charge and being responsible for their choices and their learning.

Agency often implies a sense of responsibility and young people playing an active role.⁵³

This idea of ownership comes up a lot, across a variety of schools. Students might describe it differently, but it's always about responsibility for goal setting and outcomes, relationships, and being involved in their education.

"I feel like there could be more opportunities for kids to be able to learn to trust themselves and take risks."

"For me what would have been really valuable... sitting down and being able to go through that question of - what do you love and how can you make money from it?"⁵⁴

Agency is different everywhere

Agency isn't one-size-fits-all. It can look totally different depending on the situation. Sometimes it's about students giving their opinions, other times it's about working together with teachers, and sometimes it's about students leading the way.

It's also about how power works in the classroom and school – who gets to make decisions and how those decisions are made.

Some experts⁵⁵ think of agency like a dial. You can turn it up or down depending on what's going on. Sometimes students need more freedom, and sometimes they need more guidance.

What does agency need to thrive?

A few things need to be in place for agency to work:

Students need to be able to express themselves.

They need to feel like they can speak up.

Someone needs to listen to them.

And their ideas need to be taken seriously.⁵⁶

Building agency takes time, and it can be tough to change the way power works in classrooms, schools and systems. Students have told us that when teachers trust them with important decisions, it makes them feel respected and valued. And when they're encouraged to take on responsibilities that match their interests and skills, it's really empowering.⁵⁷

Giving students a sense of ownership over their learning doesn't just happen magically

When we've talked to young people they've told us it is also about "ownership"

Agency in action

Over time we have seen ambitions for student agency deepen within schools, from initial steps of enabling student voice on extra-curricular activities to supporting co-design and partnership with students across all aspects of their learning.

Templestowe College allows students to choose their own classes and co-create subjects based on their interests, ensuring their curriculum, and timetable, is responsive and unique to student needs.

SEDA College makes space for senior secondary students to demonstrate their learning through projects rather than formal subjects, giving students agency to learn alongside industry partners, in practical contexts.

At **Hunter Sports High School**, there are different academies that focus on different skills, so students can find one that matches their interests and abilities.

SACE Board has enabled agency across South Australia and Northern Territory at the system level, making space in the year 11-12 curriculum for schools to contextualise learning to meet diverse student needs.

Agency is a skill

Schools are trying different things to build learner agency, including training teachers in student-centered approaches and getting the community on board. They're also helping students feel comfortable giving feedback, trying new things, and to take initiative in adjusting their approach if something's not working.

"The [teachers] know how to work with me and how to make my day's work in ways so I can get the most out of education."⁵⁸

Students who haven't had a lot of control over their learning might need extra support to take the lead. And teachers play a big role in helping students find their passions and encourage them to challenge themselves academically:

"I wasn't even going to pick economics...That teacher really thinking about me and pushing me to do more, because I could do it, felt amazing."⁵⁹

Feedback is really important. Students and teachers need data about students' strengths and capabilities to make good decisions about learning.

"Having a teacher or someone in a position of power telling you that you're doing good and that you are recognised for your skills...it's really impactful."⁶⁰

Some schools use tools like self-assessments and student-led reporting to help students reflect on their progress:

At **Heathfield High School**, teachers work with students to clearly define roles in group projects, such as leadership and facilitation, to help students take responsibility and contribute effectively to their teams.

At **Rooty Hill High School**, students co-construct their own academic report comments by assessing their own learning goals in each subject.

EREA Flexible Schools use a shared assessment approach that helps students see how they're doing and understand their strengths and areas for growth.

The benefits of agency

Young people are telling us that when they can direct their own learning, they feel more in control of their lives.

"I went from taking teachers' word as gospel to then, trusting in my own work more than the teachers. So if I put in the effort to learn in a class I would take more out of it. Whereas if I had to keep to this old structure, I wouldn't have put in as much effort, because there was too much structure."⁶¹

Young people are more excited about learning because they're invested in it.

They're also building confidence and learning about themselves – what they're good at, what they enjoy, and what they want to explore. This helps them find purpose in school and in life.

Templestowe College allows students to choose their own classes and co-create subjects

At Hunter Sports High School, there are different academies that focus on different skills

And when they're doing work that's relevant to the real world, they can see the impact of their efforts and feel even more motivated.

"A moment of realisation for me is when I helped a student and I actually see their smile afterwards... I realised I genuinely enjoy helping people."

"That's when I realised, ok, I actually have to have empathy. It is actually important... to be an IT developer."⁶²

Growth in self-efficacy often links to improved academic outcomes, including by supporting motivation.⁶³ Teachers are noticing that agency can lead to better grades, especially for students who weren't engaged before.

"I just saw these amazing changes with students. From students who had behaviour issues, attendance issues, social issues, or general teenage issues - they all ended up getting something positive out of it."

Growth in self-efficacy often links to improved academic outcomes

Agency is the future

To solve the big problems of the future, we need young people who are curious and willing to try new things.

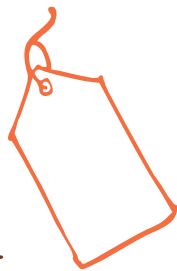
But as children get older, they can lose that natural curiosity because they have to follow a lot of rules and structures. They learn to be less creative so they can fit into a system that only measures them in one way.

One young person described how creativity diminishes if you don't get a chance to exercise it:

"It dampens my creativity. Because you've got all these things that you want to do and the stuff you want to express, and after so long not being able to do that properly you just kind of lose it."⁶⁴

This decline in capacity has been measured, and the figures are stark. Young people at 15 report lower social and emotional skills (which include aspects of creativity) than 10 year olds.⁶⁵

Young people are currently losing these vital skills the older they get, whilst at the same time needing to navigate more complex scenarios.



Fieldwork examples

We've seen lots of different ways that schools are helping students take charge of their learning.

The following looks at both an example of a system wide approach through the **Northern Territory Learning Commission** and an example of a local approach enacted over time in **Rooty Hill High School**.

The Northern Territory Learning Commission

The Northern Territory Learning Commission (NTLC) is all about getting students involved in making school better - as co-creators of their learning environments. They believe that since students are the ones who experience school every day, they should have a say in how it's run. It's a partnership between students, teachers, school leaders, and policymakers.

Why partner with students?

The NTLC partners with students because they're the ones who are most affected by decisions made about their education. They have firsthand experience and can offer valuable insights.

As one person put it:

"Those who are most directly impacted by our decisions should be a partner in those decisions."

The NTLC has noticed that young people are really enthusiastic about making education better. Young people articulate an "urgency for things to be better, accompanied by an ability to describe what this change could be and how it might be experienced, but also an energy and advocacy for the change of practice required to make it a reality."⁶⁶

The NTLC wants students to be co-creators of their learning environments and involves them in designing, testing, and implementing changes to improve their schools.

Local context matters when developing and embedding agency

Trust is key

The NTLC's success in getting students involved comes down to trust. They're transparent about how decisions are made and make sure everyone has an equal chance to participate by preparing both students and teachers.

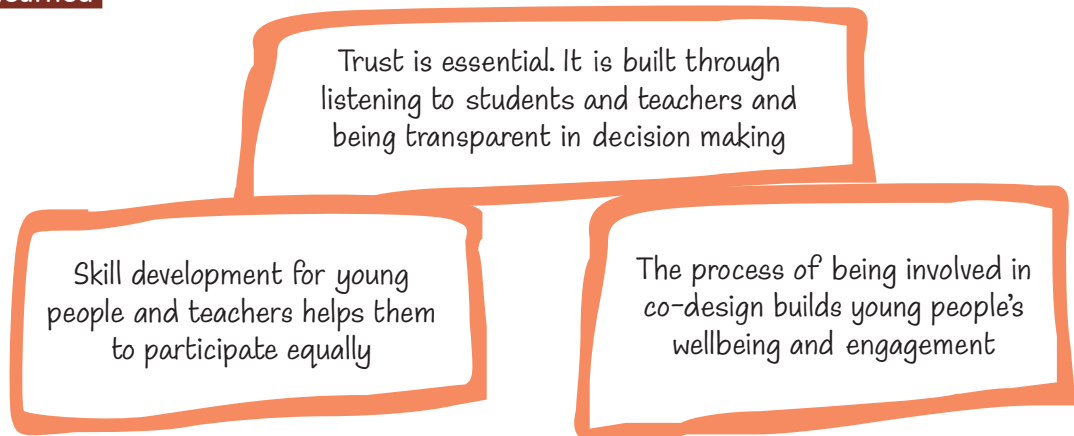
"Students experience environments where they can be valued and heard. Trust is built through transparency in decision making processes despite the complexity. (When) students trust that their insights are valued and their contributions can lead to real change, they engage more deeply, take more risks and feel a greater sense of belonging."⁶⁷

It's also important to make sure students and teachers have the right skills to contribute effectively. This includes things like professional learning in data analysis and facilitation for both students and teachers.

Making sure everyone is heard

The NTLC draws on the lived experience of students who are disengaged or disengaging, capturing and sharing this to ensure the contributions of students who are not at the table are heard and considered. They want to make sure everyone's voice is heard so that any changes they make will benefit all students.

3 key things we've learned



Agency is built into everything they do at the school

Rooty Hill High School

Rooty Hill High School shows how local context matters when developing and embedding agency. They've been intentionally and systematically building student agency for more than a decade. Their story shows how they've grown and expanded agency over time, based on what their community needs and what they have capacity to implement.

Rooty Hill High School defines agency as "the capacity of individuals to think for themselves, act independently, take responsibility for their own actions and make informed choices for the present and future."⁶⁸

Agency is built into everything they do at the school cascading from their strategic plan, from personalised learning to focusing on building skills and encouraging students to set their own goals and track their progress.

Each student at Rooty Hill High School has a personalised learning plan

Responding to local context

Rooty Hill High School knows its community well and has created personalised learning and wellbeing programs to fit student needs. The school draws from a community that is socially, culturally and linguistically diverse. According to NCOSS, 23% of 16-year-olds living in the community live in poverty.⁶⁹ The school works to give every student opportunity despite the challenges they face.

The school offers lots of opportunities for students to find and follow their interests, both in and out of the classroom. It wants to help students get ready for life after school, whether that's going to further education or getting a job.

The school also works with local businesses and community groups to give students chances they might not get otherwise, like finding mentors, getting work experience, and learning important life skills.

Personalised learning for every student

Each student at Rooty Hill High School has a personalised learning plan. When students enroll, they're interviewed with their families to help the school understand their interests, expectations, needs, and goals.

From there, teachers can create learning programs that build on each student's needs and strengths. As students move forward, they create their own academic goals and keep track of their own progress. This gives students a deeper understanding and sense of ownership of their learning and progress.

Using data and tools

Rooty Hill High School uses data and tools to support its approach, including student data from interviews, assessments and surveys like Tell Them From Me (TTfM). Students play a big role in analysing and using this data, including having conversations about their learning plans twice a year to set and reflect on academic and social goals.

A "Student Analyst Team" works with each Year Advisor to analyse the TTfM student survey and give feedback to staff and students.

Staff mentors work with students to create learner profiles that show what they know, do and understand, which they can use for making job applications and applying for university entry.³³

Driving whole school action and improvement

Rooty Hill High School's approach to building agency involves the whole school. It's a key priority and changes over time based on what's going on – for example, after COVID, the school focused on building resilience to help students with self-regulation and wellbeing.

School leadership structures and professional learning are targeted to support agency, with teachers and support staff having a key role in supporting and challenging students.

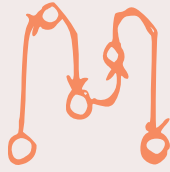
What's Standing Out

Schools can play an important role linking young people to community and industry support

Getting students ready for life after school is important, and made easier when students know what they might want to do

Students learn more about themselves when they create their own reports and profiles

What our schools and systems have been grappling with



When do we have direct instruction, and when is more agency appropriate? What is the role of teachers?

Schools and systems are learning that agency isn't a single construct and that it can be used to create a more engaging and effective learning environment for students.

The role of teachers remains crucial both in direct instruction and building strong relationships with learners.

Young people have told us how important teachers are in challenging them to set bigger goals and in building their self belief.



Capturing the benefits of agency

We are seeing how agency is key to supporting all young people to engage with learning. When learning has personal meaning and relevance young people engage.

Young people are talking about how they feel more engaged, that learning is relevant whilst teachers are expressing joy at being able to meet a breadth of student needs.

These benefits are emerging, and difficult to capture separately as schools have a myriad of parallel initiatives.



Preparing schools, teachers and students

Agency doesn't just happen. We've seen how schools who have been on this path for a long while are embedding agency in their strategic plans.

Schools are looking at what tools teachers and students need to be able to enact agency.



Starting small, but needing to expand

Schools speak of starting small with student agency, with issues like extra-curricular activities.

They talk about the need to expand to areas that are more directly linked to academic outcomes, that young people need to have a substantive say in their overall learning for agency to lift levels of engagement.

We are seeing this as a key change over time, as schools expand their definition and application of student agency.

What is next?

Many of the projects on agency refer to the potential of digital technology as an enabler.

We need to learn more about how to measure learning in a way that works for everyone, including using digital tools to track learning in real-time and help students set goals and plan their next steps.

Even though everyone's talking about AI, we're still figuring out how technology can support different needs for students, and how this can be done fairly across school communities with different resourcing and access to expertise.

While teachers and school leaders are important for supporting agency, we should also look into how other leaders within the broader learning environment can assist.

Many participants also noted the importance of getting the community involved and on board. Giving students more control over their learning can sometimes make parents and community members nervous. Having support from the whole school system can make it easier for schools to get the community involved.

We need to learn more about how to measure learning in a way that works for everyone

Field notes:

Throughout this cycle, the issue of trust has emerged as a unifying and foundational theme

In many circumstances, education systems have lost the trust of parents, young people, and educators. Trust in institutions is at an all-time low, driven by inconsistencies in policy, a lack of transparency, and concerns over whether traditional approaches are meeting the needs of today's learners. Many feel disengaged, unheard, or uncertain about the relevance and fairness of current systems. Rebuilding trust requires genuine commitment to listening, adapting, and demonstrating impact.

Across huddles, submissions, insights, conversations, and explorations, trust has surfaced in multifaceted ways.

Where there has been a deliberate focus on agency and capabilities:

Young people are placing trust in teachers to genuinely listen, value their perspectives, and make decisions with transparency. As they are entrusted with greater responsibility and equipped with the necessary tools to navigate choices, they develop confidence in their own judgement. This trust empowers them to take risks, fostering self-belief and resilience. They feel respected and valued, deepening their sense of belonging and engagement within their learning environments.

Teachers are placing trust in young people, granting them agency in their learning journeys. They are trusting that a focus on capabilities will yield meaningful and lasting outcomes for their students. This shift reflects a belief in students' potential and a commitment to fostering their holistic development.

Schools are placing trust in teachers to educate the whole learner, encouraging the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches that prioritise both academic and personal growth.

Education systems are entrusting schools with the flexibility to implement curriculum in ways that best serve their students, recognising that rigid structures do not accommodate the diverse needs of learners.

Industry partners are investing their trust in young people, engaging in meaningful collaborations with schools to cultivate essential capabilities. They trust that new forms of recognition will provide a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of candidates' skills and potential beyond traditional metrics.

Parents are increasingly placing trust in evolving educational models, recognising that new approaches are equipping their children with the skills needed for an unpredictable future. They are shifting towards a broader appreciation of achievement, valuing diverse pathways as valid, secure, and aspirational.

Parents are looking for their children's learning environments to acknowledge, respond and value the 'whole person.'

Universities and admissions selectors are adapting their trust frameworks, recognising that alternative pathways into higher education can lead to better student engagement, retention, and success. They are embracing new models of selection, ensuring a stronger alignment between students' capabilities and their chosen courses, ultimately improving long-term outcomes.

This trust is not built on blind faith but on experimentation, iteration, and evidence-based practice. Stakeholders acknowledge that the current system and its metrics, in isolation, are insufficient and cannot be wholly relied upon to meet the evolving needs of students or our community. A new approach is necessary—one that engages, supports, and empowers all learners to thrive.

As this approach continues to evolve, it is being refined and strengthened through ongoing learning, adaptation, and increased ambition. Trust remains the cornerstone of this transformation—reinforced by a growing body of evidence that underscores the necessity and efficacy of these evolving practices. This journey is not static; it is an iterative process of deepening our understanding and commitment to creating a more inclusive, capable, and future-ready generation.

The road ahead demands collaborative action. Institutions must also build trust with communities and places, working alongside them to imagine and develop approaches that reflect their unique needs and aspirations. To fully earn the trust of education authorities, we must build adaptable models that fit diverse contexts while aligning with national standards. Clear evaluation frameworks and open collaboration among policymakers, educators, and communities are essential. By refining strategies, embracing innovation, and staying focused on student success, we can ensure trust is not only gained but strengthened through meaningful progress and lasting impact.

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