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# Report into Parental Engagement in Career Education

STUDY WORK GROW

Lucy Sattler

# Report into Parental Engagement in Career Education

A report into how, when, where, and why parents engage with their child's career education and decision-making process.

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**A note on terminology:**

*Parent* is not adequate to cover the range of significant adults who care for and raise young people, but for the sake of brevity it will suffice.

We recognise that young people are raised by people who are called a variety of terms, including *parent, carer, guardian, grandparent, aunt, uncle, foster-parent, step-parent,* and that all of these people have the same status when it comes to guiding young people. What matters is that they have a close caring relationship with the young person, and that they are involved in some way in the decision making process.

# Understanding Parents

There are over half a million students in Year 11 and 12 in Australia, and every one of those students is on the cusp of some serious decision making (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Whether they've got a clear idea of what they want to do once school is over, or are just starting to explore their options, almost all of those 500,000 students will be taking input from their parents, carers, or guardians.

Over the past few months I've been researching international career education programs aiming to identify solutions that may work in an Australian context. In that time, the issue of parental engagement in career education arose again and again; at the end of the day, parents are the most influential factor in a student's career decisions, and if we want what we're doing with career education to work, we need programs that support parents *alongside* their children.

While the team and I at Study Work Grow continue to work on our parent engagement program, (called *FlownUp*, launching in 2022), I've put together this report to help shed some light on how parents influence their children, and what we can do to equip them with the skills and information they need to effectively guide their children when and where required throughout their senior high school journey. The aim is to find a way to do better for our young people, and improve their chances of a successful post-school transition.

In this report, I've explored the ways in which parents influence their children, considered how to reach parents effectively, and investigated the types of support parents (and their teens) need to access, to be able to navigate this complex period as successfully as possible.

I hope you find it useful.

*Lucy Sattler*

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# Contents

# Summary

Supporting parents is a priority. We know that parents are the most significant influence in post-school decision making, but that many parents feel unsupported and ill-equiped for the role.

In this report, we found the following:

- **Parents are the most significant influencer** in their child's career decisions

- Parents often rely on **out-of-date and inaccurate information** to support their children, and may lack confidence in their knowledge and ability

- **Parents are busy**, deal with multiple issues in addition to supporting their child, and lack time and resources to regularly engage with the school

- Schools and teachers **lack the time and resources** to generate parental engagement programs that go beyond career expos or information sessions, despite their best efforts

- Existing parental engagement programs for career development, where they exist, **prioritise one-way communication** and require the parent to attend school, usually in an evening

- Research from around the world suggests career education best-practice requires **multiple touch-points** between parents and schools

To effectively support parents, we need to make sure they have access to relevant, localised, and accurate information about jobs, training pathways, and the labour market, as well as the skills to listen to their children and provide supportive feedback.

This report explores these concepts through an analysis of how parents influence their children, how we can effectively reach parents, and how to support both parents and students during the school-to-work transition.

There are over half a million students in Year 11 & 12 in Australia

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# Section #1

# Understanding How Parental Influence Works

A lot of energy goes into supporting young people with their transition from school to work or higher education, but the decision-making process they use to choose a future pathway remains largely a mystery.

Over the past twenty years, researchers have started to look into the role played by parents in the career decision-making processes of their children. Anecdotal evidence suggests they play a larger role than we previously thought, and studies have confirmed this to be the case.

In fact, **parents are the number one influencer** over their children's post-school decisions, and play more of a role than their teachers, careers advisors, or friends (Barnes et al., 2020; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Haywood & Scullion, 2018; Lindley et al., 2019; Miles Morgan, 2012; Tey et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2003; Watson et al., 2016). Studies found again and again that children were relying on their parents for direction with their post school decisions.

There are a few reasons why this is not surprising; regardless of the quality of their relationship, children usually recognise that parents are 'on their side', and that they know the child better than anyone else (Watson et al., 2016). Teachers were often found to be the second most important influence, suggesting again that trusted, impartial adults hold the majority of the influence over young people.

#1  Parents        #2 Teachers        #3  Friends        #4  Parttime job        #5  Media

# Section #1
# How Parental Influence Works

Improving outcomes for students has been a priority for most educational thinkers and policy makers around the world, and this focus on outcomes has led to the creation of accountability systems to measure in school performance, including standardised testing and school completion targets (Biesta, 2020; Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Larsen, 2020).

However, all of the focus on in-school factors on student achievement is insignificant when compared to the power of parental involvement.

Desforges & Abouchaar's (2003) literature review found that 'at-home good parenting', or parental involvement in a child's education that is spontaneous, is the single most important factor in student achievement.

*'at-home good parenting' is the single most important factor in student achievement...*

This review was conducted almost twenty years ago, and has been backed up in study after study since that time, yet parental engagement strategies in Australia are still in their infancy (Miles Morgan, 2012; Watson et al., 2016).

For example, the Parents as Career Transition Support (PACTS) program is highly regarded around the world, yet retains a focus on small group workshops with mixed efficacy reviews (Miles Morgan, 2012; Polvere & Lim, 2015).

## How parents influence their children

We know that parents have a big impact, but we don't know a lot about how their influence works.

What is it that they do that gives them this power over their child's decision making process, and how can we help them improve the quality of the guidance they provide?

When it comes to making career decisions, children and parents form a **collective decision-making team** - one with some shared goals, yet conflicting priorities.

Parents can be considered as the most important role models; they model work behaviours for their children, and connect them with insights from the world of work on a regular basis.

# Section #1
# How Parental Influence Works

Children **start to form a vocational identity when they are very young**, based on the types of jobs they see people like them, their family and their social circle performing (Barnes et al., 2020; Gottfredson, 2005; Okocha, 2001; Polvere & Lim, 2015).

We know that **children often adopt parental aspirations** for career path and educational attainment level, and parents model career decision-making as they navigate their own career.

This doesn't mean that parents know what they are doing, or that they mean to influence their child in this way. This level of influence is in many ways **hidden and unexpected** (Choy et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2016; Watson et al., 2016).

Studies into VET aspirations, for example, have found that even when parents (and to a lesser extent, teachers), have consciously tried to remain neutral, they have unintentionally influenced which pathways were chosen (Billett et al., 2020; Choy et al., 2020).

On top of all this, teenagers tend to **trust** their parents - they've been there from the start, after all. Even when the parent-child relationship is strained, teenagers recognise that parents generally want the best for their children, even if they don't know how to go about it.

# What we know about parental influence

## #1. It's a team effort

Teenagers and parents form a collective decision-making team for the decision making process

## #2. Ideas start young

Children start to form ideas about what they want to do for work when they are very young

## #3. Shared aspirations

Children adopt parental aspirations, so if parents aspire to university, their teen will too

## #4. Hidden influence

Parents may not know that they are influencing their children

## #5. Parents are 'safe'

Parents are a 'safe-space', want the best for their children, and their children know this

# Section #1
# How Parental Influence Works

**Parents are influential even when they are uninformed**

Evidence shows that parents (and teachers) draw on their own experiences when guiding children in the career decision-making process, and that *regular interactions* have as much of an impact as *specific advice* – in other words, children model what they see and hear, and subconscious socialisation can be as important as educated career guidance (Barnes et al., 2020; Billett et al., 2020).

For example, almost all teachers attend university and have direct, first-hand experience with a university education, yet few teachers also have direct experience with VET education or work in a trade.

This can lead to teachers developing a perception that **university provides the best possible outcome.** Teachers want the best for their students, and encourage them to pursue the highest possible level of qualification they can attain, even if the evidence shows that VET pathways can be more beneficial than university for some students (Choy et al., 2020; Hargreaves & Osborne, 2017).

While we cannot know for sure that parents would make a different decision given all the information, we can assume they would based on the evidence. For example, four in five parents would prefer their child to go to university over a VET pathway, driven by the underlying belief that a university education will improve their employability, yet the data shows that a VET qualification doubles your chances of finding work on graduation, compared to university (Bisson & Stubley, 2017).
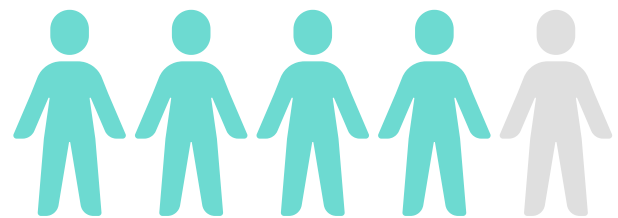


Figure 1: *4 in 5 parents would prefer a university pathway for their child*

Miles Morgan (2012) found that best-practice parental engagement should move away from a deficit approach, where parents are only engaged at critical decision-making points, towards a strengths-based model which would utilise the skills, knowledge and experience of parents to enhance career opportunities for their children.

While children remain living with their parents until the end of high school, parents will remain the primary influence over their child's career decisions. As such, we need to equip parents with the skills to recognise when their subconscious modelling behaviour could impact on their children's choices.

# Section #1
# How Parental Influence Works

**It's a team decision**

Regardless of the level of impact, we cannot ignore that this career decision making process is occurring in tandem with an inevitable relationship shift as the child becomes an adult, while the parent learns to let go and the young person begins to find their own way. What is already a complex and tense situation is made even more difficult as parents adjust to handing over the reins to their child.

Parents do not influence their child simply through modelling and advice provision, they **actually play a role in the decision making process** with their child.

What the child does when they leave school is not simply their decision – their decision will be made either **in collaboration with** the parent(s), or **under persuasion** from the parents; in one study, many of the student participants used the word 'negotiation' to describe the process (Billett et al., 2020).

Children are being asked to make decisions about their career at a time of high stress, while they are completing their final years of high school, under the looming spectre of certain and dramatic change (Choy et al., 2020).

Parents use a variety of strategies to influence their child's decision, but they do this primarily as parents with a focus on maintaining a good relationship with their child long past the end of the transition from student to adult.

**It's a balancing act**

Parents feel the need to balance maintaining the relationship while also encouraging their child to make the 'right' decisions, as they deal with teenage emotional changes. In other words, parents want to encourage independence, and yet stay involved at the same time (Haywood & Scullion, 2018).

Parents use a combination of persuasion and compromise to get their child to engage with the decision-making process. This tends to be a subconscious process and an extension of their normal parenting techniques, and parents may be unaware of the impact they are making on their child's decisions.

# What does all this mean?

If we know that:

a. parents are the primary influence over their children's career decisions, and
b. parents are often uninformed, distracted and lack confidence in the process,

then it is vital that we equip parents with the tools, skills, and knowledge they need to confidently assist their child with relevant, accurate advice and information.

# Section #2

# Reaching Parents

Parents are, by-and-large, busy people.

In families with teens, over two-thirds have **all** parents engaged in work. In addition to employment, there are concerns about the rent or mortgage, aging parents, and other children, which leaves only a fraction of time to guide their teenager through the impending transition (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020).
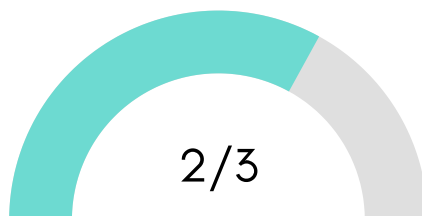


Figure 2: *In families with teens, over two-thirds have all parents engaged in work*

Studies show us that parents engage with school less as their children grow up (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). This is partly due to a lack of time and energy, but also because in many schools the opportunities for parents to engage diminish - parents are no longer invited to help with reading or spelling tests, and consigned to canteen duty or the occasional Parent Career Day, if one is held.

When it comes to events specifically related to careers, not all schools invite parents to attend information sessions, expos, or as guest speakers, and only 12% of schools held parent/student workshops (Miles Morgan, 2012, p. 8). Schools in general rely on newsletters or a website to convey information to parents.

Even if parents have the time, they may not feel comfortable approaching the school with their concerns, especially if they have limited personal experience with higher education, or if they have lingering memories of school days which they would prefer not to repeat (Barnes et al., 2020). All this means that reaching parents can be difficult, and we need to find new ways to take the knowledge to them.

# Parents are, by-and-large, busy people

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# Section #2
# Reaching Parents

**Parental engagement programs often miss the mark**

Many parental engagement programs exist around the world of varying degrees of quality. When parents are asked for feedback, they generally find the programs to be **too long** and require **too much commitment**, and this translates to low completion rates for long, multi-part, programs.

Activities which require the parent to come to school are particularly difficult, and holding events in the evening can contribute to entrenching inequality as disadvantaged parents, who are more likely to be shift workers and single parents, may be unable to attend at all (Barnes et al., 2020).

Socio-economic status (SES) and maternal level of education are most significantly associated with the level of parental involvement in school activities.



Family wealth        Mother's education

High SES families with a highly educated female parent are more likely to be involved at school, whereas families at the other end of the spectrum may find any engagement difficult.

Parent information evenings in particular are often a source of "frustration and confusion" for many parents (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003, p. 43).

Time, money, and psychological barriers all play a role in how much parents were willing to engage with their child's school.

**Spontaneous versus induced involvement**

Not all parental engagement has the same impact.

The majority of generic (ie. not career-related) parental involvement is spontaneous, and this kind of involvement is voluntary, self-motivated and self-sustained. In other words, the school doesn't need to initiate the involvement for it to occur (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

However, in order to initiate this spontaneous involvement the parent requires the confidence to approach the school and/or teachers, and this kind of involvement may be difficult to manage and organise without increasing teacher workload, but when it works it can lead to improved outcomes.

In particular, spontaneous involvement can increase the chances of a successful post-school transition (Barnes et al., 2020; Polvere & Lim, 2015).

# Section #2
# Reaching Parents

Induced parental engagement is the opposite of spontaneous involvement; these 'top-down' approaches are school-organised programs which encourage parental involvement, and are often implemented to remedy a deficit (in this case, a lack of parental understanding of the world of work and post-school options) (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Miles Morgan (2012) found that most induced parental engagement strategies in Australia are one-way (school to parent), focus on immediate issues, and fail to link information to long term career pathways.

For example, schools may host a Parent Information Evening for parents of Year 10 students who are going through the process of subject selection. These events may focus on university entry requirements and VET options, in preference to linking senior subjects to potential careers.

**We need a better way**

Despite their best efforts, schools have limited power to compel parents to engage with induced activities.

Instead, parents should be empowered to choose when and where they engage with school-run programs and career development activities, to encourage participation and provide equitable access to all students and parents.

Indeed, **disadvantaged students have the most to gain** when parents are able to participate in school-run career engagement programs (Barnes et al., 2020).

To increase the ability of parents to access the skills and information they need, events should be scheduled at a range of times and held on a regular basis, so that parents who miss out on one event are able to access the next.

Information should be provided in a format which is easy to understand for someone with no formal career education. We've come a long way since the majority of parents were at school, and they may have missed out on this as part of their own education. Parents are also *outside* of the education system, and complex information should be 'translated' so parents can interpret it.

Programs which allow parents to engage with career information at **a time and place that suits them** can empower them and give them a better chance of being able to make best use of in-school career events, such as career expos.

Through online or on-demand parent education programs, they can learn to speak the same language as their children and the post-school option providers, reducing barriers to understanding.

# Section #2
# Reaching Parents

**Global best practice requires multiple touch-points**

Schools often lack the resources to implement global best practice approaches to parental engagement (Miles Morgan, 2012).

Best practice **requires a shift away** from passive information transmission towards active engagement and the creation of dialogue between the school, students, and parents.

This would require the extension of career development to earlier year levels, and the creation of shared activities which stimulate productive conversations between the child and the parent(s), based on accurate and relevant information.

This kind of approach requires more than the occasional Parent Information Evening, and while there is a place for mass transmission of information from the school to parents, including the opportunity for parents to ask questions, more needs to be done to build the confidence and knowledge-base of parents and facilitate dialogue.

Online delivery, for example, could allow parents to engage with information and build career conversation skills at a time and place of their choosing, and can be initiated spontaneously when the parent is in need (Barnes et al., 2020).

# Section #2
# Reaching Parents

**The decision process can take years**

Not all teenagers go through the same process at the same time, and some will be in need of acute advice and assistance earlier or later in their journey.

Restricting access to parental engagement programs to a short series of workshops delivered at set times limits the ability of parents to access support when and where they need it.

For example, we know that students seek different kinds of information and advice depending on how settled they are about their career aspirations, and some students take longer than others to decide to actively engage with the process (Aley & Levine, 2020; Haywood & Scullion, 2018).

Offering multiple touch points and delivery methods (online, face-to-face, newsletters, etc.) increases the chance of reaching parents and engaging them with accurate information. Plus, this can be more effective than only employing one method during a few key transition points.

Miles Morgan (2012) found in their review that "multiple and simultaneous" engagement strategies were found in all successful parental engagement programs.

Figure 3: *Pathway decision timeline*

**Pathway Decision Timeline**

**0-12**
The process starts when children are very young, and learning about the world of work.

**12-14**
Many young people start seriously considering their options once they hit Year 8 and select subjects for Year 9 & 10, but others may not.

**14-16**
In most schools, students need to pick their senior subjects in Year 10, and they may be thinking about their career a lot at this time.

**16-18**
In Year 11 & 12, students start to plan what they'll do once school is over. Some start early, others put it off until the last minute.

# Section #2
# Reaching Parents

The information parents have about the world of work and higher education is often inaccurate and out-of-date, but parents may not even realise this - in other words, they don't know what they don't know (Barnes et al., 2020). Parents want to know what's out there, but a lack of confidence in their knowledge often leads them to hold back from providing specific advice to their children when asked, although not from providing subconscious modelling and beliefs (Polvere & Lim, 2015).

Providing accurate and up-to-date information through a range of delivery methods can increase accessibility for parents, and allow them to update their knowledge at a time and place of their choosing, leading to a more holistic understanding.

The development of such programs takes advantage of the strength of influence parents have over their children, ensuring that parents are equipped to provide the right advice and support to their child whenever it is needed.

*Parents... must be engaged, fully informed and supported in the advice they provide to their children.*

# Section #3

# Supporting Parents

The Education Council (2020, p. 17) is clear:

Recommendation 2.2
All students (and their parents) should have access to professional career guidance at school. Parents and families have the greatest influence on students' career-related decisions at the senior secondary level. They must be engaged, fully informed and supported in the advice they provide to their children.

To effectively support parents as they in turn support their children, we need to provide parents with information about which careers will be available in the future, skills to effectively listen to their children's career concerns and provide feedback about their choices, as well as skills to model and shape work-related skills and values (Barnes et al., 2020).

In other words, parents need to a. know that they are influential, b. have the information they need, and c. have the confidence and self-efficacy to conduct the discussions required.

Understand their influence

Have the information

Feel confident to talk

Figure 4: *Requirements for effective parental involvement*

# Section #3
# Supporting Parents

**We need to build parental self-efficacy**

Your perception of your ability to manage a process is your level of self-efficacy. Albert Bandura developed the theory of self-efficacy to help us understand how our perception of our own abilities affects our ability to perform – for example, it's not enough for a parent to have the skills they need to be able to speak about careers with their child, the parent must also *know* that they have these skills (Bandura, 2005).

Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy are;
- how we have performed in the past,
- observations of others behaviour,
- verbal encouragement from others, and
- the ability to manage our emotions when it comes to performance (Turner et al., 2003).

In other words, parents build confidence in their ability to guide their child's career development when they have a. had previous successful conversations, b. have observed others advising their children (possibly when their own parents advised them), c. have had others tell them they did well (such as the child thanking them for the chat), and d. stayed calm when speaking with their child.

Past
performance
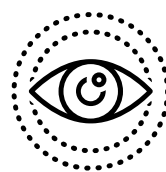
Other's
behaviour

Verbal
encouragement

Stay calm

# Section #3
# Supporting Parents

**Building confidence**

Barnes et al. (2020) suggest that parental career engagement programs don't just give parents information, they give them confidence.

The programs help them learn how to use their skills, knowledge and experiences to support their child, and it also teaches them about how their role can impact on their child's choices.

Parental engagement programs have been shown to improve the confidence of parents, which makes them more likely to engage in productive, collaborative conversations with their children (Polvere & Lim, 2015).

In contrast, parents often report holding back when they feel that their knowledge is out-of-date, and will go so far as to avoid giving an opinion even when it is asked for (Billett et al., 2020; Haywood & Scullion, 2018; Roberts, 2018; Watson et al., 2016).

The skills parents' gain through these programs can also deliver flow-on effects for the parents - increasing their awareness of potential career change options, and improving their career management skillset so they can effectively manage their own careers (Barnes et al., 2020; Education Council, 2020; Haywood & Scullion, 2018).

Career conversations are rarely structured, in-depth affairs; students report that they discuss their career with their main influencer (who is, in most cases, a parent), on a daily basis, and that these discussions generally take the form of micro-conversations (Aley & Levine, 2020).

These are the five minute discussions grabbed on the way to footy practice, during breakfast, or in the car on the way home from school. Which makes it essential that parents develop the tools to be able to manage these conversations **when and wherever they occur**, so that the parent feels they can *advise* their child with accurate information, and *guide* their child in a positive, controlled way.

As each of these two factors (*information provision* and *conflict management*) plays such a significant role in building positive outcomes, they've been addressed separately in the following pages.

# Section #3
# Supporting Parents - Information Provision

Parents need to feel confident that the information they are giving their child is correct.

Which explains why parents (and other influencers) often fall back onto personal experiences when speaking about careers with their child; having experienced something for ourselves (or heard about it from someone we trust) makes us feel confident that the information we are providing is accurate (Barnes et al., 2020; Education Council, 2020; Vernon & Drane, 2020).

Problems arise when **parents fall back onto personal experiences** from years, or sometimes decades, in the past, then present these experiences as facts which are relevant in the present.

Parents may know that they left school twenty years ago, but it doesn't feel like that long.

In the meantime, t**he labour market has gone through a rapid and fundamental shift** away from stable, linear careers towards flexible work arrangements and micro-credentials, and the personal experiences of parents are unlikely to resemble the experiences of their children as they enter the workforce (Gallup, Inc., 2017; Torii, 2018; UK Digital Skills Taskforce, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2019).

Outside of the occasional news headline, **accurate and in-depth labour market information** can be difficult to come by.

There are a plethora of government and non-government websites dedicated to presenting information about jobs and industries, but these often require the user to proactively search for information on-demand, and there is an expectation that the user will be able to navigate to find what they need and then understand the information in context (for website examples, see: courseseeker.edu.au, myfuture.edu.au, joboutlook.gov.au, courseseeker.edu.au, skillsone.com.au).

Even parents who want to engage with labour market information can find it difficult to know where to start (Barnes et al., 2020; Billett et al., 2020; Education Council, 2020; Haywood & Scullion, 2018).

Therefore, **the school has a role to play** in ensuring parents have the information they need.

In addition, when the school provides some or all of the information the parent needs, they also bring everyone onto the same page, so students receive a consistent and cohesive message about their options. Schools can also help parents to recognise that more information is required, and then help them understand where to find it.

# Section #3
# Supporting Parents - Conflict Management

It's not enough for parents to have the information, they also need to know how to provide it in a constructive and collaborative way.

We cannot view parents simply as career influencers, as you would a social media influencer; parents are also caregivers, landlords, educators, taxi drivers and financial managers for their children, and providing career guidance is merely one priority amongst many.

The evidence suggests that parents are also more concerned with what they perceive as **the most secure pathway** for their child, and will choose which advice and information they deliver to persuade their children towards the 'preferred' pathway.

*...parents are more concerned with what they perceive as the most secure pathway...*

For example, for many parents it is enough that they get their child to go to university at all, especially if the child refuses to engage with the process or is unclear about their pathway.

In this scenario, parents may choose to leave the choice of course entirely up to their child, and won't provide any information which may dissuade the child from their preferred degree, for fear of putting them off university altogether (Barnes et al., 2020; Haywood & Scullion, 2018).

Which means that parents **preference their own priorities** (secure employment in a suitable field) when influencing their child, and these preferences may not be in line with those of their child.

The evidence shows that there is a **disconnect** between what students prioritise when it comes to post-school outcomes, and what their parents think they want. Not only do students seek secure, stable employment over personal interests, they are also more realistic than their parents give them credit for, ranking 'lifestyle' as last in their list of priorities. Parents (and teachers) often undervalue this realism (Billett et al., 2020).

**What does all this mean?**

Parents and their children have different priorities, and are unlikely to fully understand what the other is thinking. This misalignment can lead to conflict.

# Section #3
# Supporting Parents - Conflict Management

Avoiding conflict is a high priority for parents as they renegotiate the terms of their ongoing relationship with their soon-to-be-adult child.

Parents already use a variety of subconscious techniques to maintain a (relatively) positive relationship with their child, but actively developing a conscious set of effective conflict avoidance (negotiation) techniques will equip parents with more tools to manage the relationship transition.

In other words, **parents need to know how to change strategy to respond to their child's needs**, and an effective parental engagement program can assist with this process.

By helping parents understand the world of work as their child sees it, and highlighting the changes in priorities that young people face, schools can help parents become more effective in supporting the child's decision making.

**Team decision-making can lead to conflict**

Parents don't just influence their child's decision, they usually work together with their child to reach a join decision. This doesn't mean that all decisions are shared, but that both parent and child are involved in the process of researching and evaluating options.

Parents find it difficult to balance the need to stand back from their child and allow them to develop their independence, while also wanting control (to some extent) over the decisions being made.
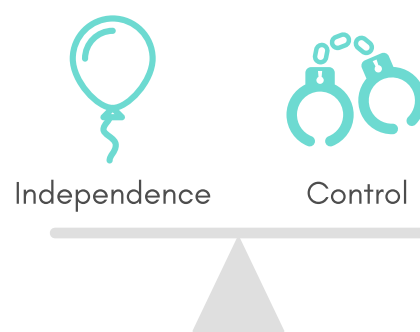
Figure 5: *Parents balance teaching independence with retaining control*

In order to maintain this balance while avoiding conflict, parents use a combination of **persuasion** and **compromise**.

*How does this work?* Parents can (and often do) use their extensive knowledge of their child to *persuade* the child to adopt their preferences, and, in the event that the persuasion is ineffective, the parent can decide to *compromise* on some points (Haywood & Scullion, 2018).

Teaching parents when and how to use each strategy will improve their skills at managing conflict throughout the process.

*...persuasion and compromise help parents develop the ability to step back and let their child take control over their career decision.*

HAYWOOD & SCULLION, 2018

# Section #3
# Supporting Parents

Parental engagement programs which make parents aware of the power of persuasion and compromise help parents develop the ability to step back and let their child take control over their career decision. This, in turn, can increase the child's sense of ownership over their choice, which can **improve their chances** of successfully putting their pathway plan into action (Bandura, 2005; Lent & Brown, 1996).

Young people often take mental shortcuts, and arrive at a decision quickly without engaging with all the relevant information.

In fact, they often seek out information which confirms their existing views, avoid sources of information that are difficult to navigate, and prefer solutions to short-term problems over long-term consequences (Choy et al., 2020; Education Council, 2020; Vernon & Drane, 2020).

Hence, **parents can play a vital role in mediating the shortcuts that their children make**, such as by providing a rational viewpoint, challenging any rushed decisions, and asking their child to justify their decisions with information.

Rather than simply using persuasion and compromise to push the parent's preferred pathway, effective negotiation skills can help parents understand when to step back and let the child take control, while maintaining oversight and providing a valuable 'sounding board' when required.

# In brief

#1. We should be including parents in any career education program

#2. We need to ensure parents, as well as students, have the right information

#3. Parental engagement programs need to reach parents at a time and place of their choosing

#4. Post-school transitions are complex; conflict management skills can help

#5. Giving parents the skills and information they need can help them guide their teen

# Our Approach

At Study Work Grow, we see everyday the impact that parents have in supporting their child's career decisions.

Thousands of parents turn to us to deliver information which is easy to digest, relevant, and up-to-date, and free of bias or marketing influence. We are student (and parent) focused, and choose to consistently place the needs of our audience first.

Over the years, we've realised that parents are struggling to support their children during the crucial school-to-work transition period. Parents seek out our help, and we're creating a program right now to improve the way parents engage with career information in conjunction with their school.

FlownUp is a spontaneous and voluntary intervention. Rather than aiming to 'fill gaps', we've taken a strengths-based approach to facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge which complement *existing* parental involvement, rather than trying to reconstruct what parental involvement should look like.

We want to equip parents with the knowledge and confidence to become trusted advisors to their children, and teach them to balance the need to secure the best future pathway for their child, while also fostering independence.

FlownUp will be available for Australian schools in 2022. At this stage, we welcome feedback and input from interested parties, which can be directed to lucy@studyworkgrow.com.au.

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