

Career education: every teacher has a role



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Career education prepares young people for their future. A key part of this is helping them to think about the paid work that they will do, and to choose and engage with learning paths. It also encourages students to consider how they will balance work and wider life, and to think about citizenship and their role in the community.

Teachers want all young people to succeed in school, to take their learning into the next stage of their life and make a positive contribution to their world. Therefore, thinking about career education should be important to all teachers, as a career is how we put our learning to work after leaving school.

Why all teachers are career teachers

Ideally, all schools will have a lead career development practitioner who is responsible for leading the school's career education and counselling program. They will be able to support you to engage with career education.

Career practitioners cannot do their job without involving the rest of the school staff. Careers should be a whole-school responsibility in which every teacher has a role.

There are four main ways teachers can support young people to think about and develop their careers. The first three are already part of what you do.

- 1 **Be a role model.** In your life you have made learning choices and transitions, and built a successful career as a teacher. You may also have had other jobs, undertaken voluntary work, made mistakes and struggled at times. You could allow your students to learn from some of your successes and mistakes. However, be aware that while your experience is valuable, jobs, education and training are rapidly changing. Refer students to a reliable source such as myfuture for up-to-date careers information.
- 2 **Be willing to talk.** Encourage students to talk about their future and possible careers. This might be a brief discussion as part of a wider conversation about academic progress or personal issues. These informal conversations do not replace career counselling. Always refer students to your school's career practitioner when they need deeper help.

- 3 **Make links to careers in your teaching.** Discuss how the knowledge and skills learners are developing are used in the world outside school. Explore careers that require the expertise or qualifications found in your subject. All subjects include a wide range of valuable transferable skills. Point out how useful writing, research, numerical and presentation skills will be in future learning and work.
- 4 **Contribute to the career education program.** Finally, you may also get directly involved in the delivery of the career education program. Your subject knowledge, as well as your wider expertise and interests, will be of value here.

An important part of supporting career education involves considering students' potential futures and lifelong learning needs when approaching your existing teaching and pastoral roles.

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myfuture information for teachers and career practitioners provides lots of resources for teachers. These can help you to understand current learning and work opportunities, provide activities and lesson plans, and link you to research and other professional development opportunities. You'll also find past myfuture Insights papers and webinars.

If you're new to myfuture, start exploring the website at www.myfuture.edu.au, and sign up to receive targeted newsletters.

Embedding career learning in subject teaching

If done well, embedding career learning into your subject teaching can increase the relevance of, and interest in, your subject and help you answer those awkward but persistent questions from students: Why are we learning this? What use will it be?

This approach should enhance and improve the quality of your engagement with the subject area without displacing dedicated subject content.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- **What are you teaching?** Your curriculum and the skills and knowledge that you want to develop should always be the starting point.
- **What does the career program and curriculum cover?** There are likely to be many overlaps between your subject curriculum and the career curriculum. You can explore these while referring students to the school's career program for more learning opportunities. Talk to your school's career practitioner first. You can also search for career curriculum information in your jurisdiction, or access the *Australian blueprint for career development* and the Australian Curriculum: Work Studies.
- **How are the skills and knowledge that you are teaching used outside of school?** Understanding the real-world usefulness of what you are teaching is a powerful way to increase the relevance of your teaching. It also provides resources that you can use to illustrate concepts and encourage further research.
- **What jobs require (or prefer) people to have qualifications in your subject?** It is useful to know the jobs where your subject is central – some of them might surprise students. For example, many trade roles require good mathematics skills. Find out more about how careers relate to learning areas in the myfuture Career bullseyes.
- **What jobs do people who study your subject go on to work in?** Often subjects may lead people in surprising directions. It is always worth highlighting examples that show that careers often don't follow a straight line: for example, Rebel Wilson has a degree in law and Cate Blanchett has a degree in economics! The myfuture School to Work Pathways infographics are a valuable discussion tool for exploring a range of alternative paths.
- **What courses connect to your subject?** The higher education and vocational education and training courses that require or recognise your subject is critical information for you to share with students.
- **Can I involve an employer in my class?** One of the most powerful things that you can do is bring in an employer or working person to your classroom. Employers can talk about how they use your subject in their job, and the skills, experience and training they look for in future employees. Making this direct connection will really engage your students.

Examples of subject links

Subject	Possible links to careers
Drama	Simulate job interviews as part of improvisation exercises.
Humanities (e.g. history, geography)	Explore how developments over time in different locations impact on jobs, industries, working practices and career patterns.
Information technology (IT)	Audit your digital footprint and explore how IT is used in the recruitment and management of employees.
Language classes	Write CVs in different languages. Think about jobs that require second or multiple languages. Learn about workplaces in other countries and societies.
Literature	Use the concept of career to explore the motivations of characters. Explore the process of the publication of a book (including all of the jobs involved, from writers, to logistics, to retail).
Mathematics	Use labour market information to teach statistics and mathematical techniques.
Science	Involve employers in the teaching of scientific techniques. Discuss the value that a wide range of employers place on science and the skills learnt in science.

Every teacher has a role

Adding career education to what you do as a teacher shouldn't be viewed as an extra box to tick or burden to carry. If done well it will improve your connection with students, increase engagement with your subject and demonstrate real-world application of what's being taught in the curriculum.

Career education isn't something that can be left until after school has finished, but needs to be embedded into the learning goals to help young people better understand that what they do at school is vital to their future success. As a teacher you just need to help them to see these connections.

To download this paper and explore other papers in the Insights series, visit www.myfuture.edu.au/assist-others/insights

Got a question?

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References and further reading

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