

Partnering with schools to support high ability students achieve worthwhile pathways



For its Round Tables, Skyline brings together people from a diverse range of organisations to address issues of equity and opportunity in education. We are exploring the potential for sharing ideas and actions to achieve collective impact. This is a model of problem solving that aims to break down silos and allow solutions to emerge, rather than being known at the outset.

Convenor: Dr Elizabeth Hartnell-Young, Board member and Chair Futures Committee

Facilitator: Dr Dahle Suggett, Patron and member Futures Committee

Skyline's Round Table 3 on 11 November 2019 focused on school perspectives, particularly in relation to:

- Identifying and providing for gifted and talented students: what is most needed from Skyline?
- What is a reasonable commitment to Skyline activities from students, parents and schools?

SKYLINE'S PURPOSE AND FOCUS

Our constitution and program parameters require Skyline to focus on senior secondary students. We continue to search for appropriate language to describe our purpose and our work. Suggestions from this Round Table:

- Resilient not 'disadvantaged' (ie the ability to achieve in spite of disadvantage)
- Perseverance in the face of adversity
- Avoiding multi-generational poverty

It became clear from the discussions that for Skyline, working with VCE students is appropriate as 'gifted and talented' students are more likely to be identified in secondary school and 'disadvantage' will impede their VCE success. However the ability of school communities to identify these students is still limited.

Skyline could potentially assist students who miss out on selection for selective schools.

DET'S STUDENT EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

The Round Table noted that the Victorian Department of Education and Training had recently announced funding through its Student Excellence Program for high ability students including:

- access for students in years 5-8 to the Victorian High-Ability Program, a 10-week virtual extension program to be delivered by Virtual School Victoria and commencing in Term 3, 2020, with a focus on English and mathematics.
- appointing a High-Ability Practice Leader in every primary and secondary school, to coordinate the school's programs and supports for high-ability students.
- access to a 'one-stop-shop' of online resources, including professional learning modules and a teaching toolkit. This will provide teachers with practical, evidence-based resources and guidance to better support their high-ability students.

IDENTIFICATION

The Round Table noted:

- Identification is not only to do with high grades and performance (eg in NAPLAN)
- Importance of relationships with potential and current Skyline parents, as they often identify talents in their child, but may not know of resources and pathways. Selective schools see that (eg Berwick had more applications but few from Gippsland, because they are not aware, while Werribee has difficulty, because of its socio economic context).

NEW MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The Round Table raised the need for a new understanding of success beyond the ATAR score at the end of secondary schooling.

For students, accessing an individual pathway (not only the traditional medicine and law) is a realistic measure of success.

A pathway leads:

- to a worthwhile future
- out of multi-generational poverty

To achieve this, self management is important.

For donors, values are as important as practical outcomes.

21 CENTURY SKILLS

The Australian Curriculum includes General Capabilities. Other life skills include financial literacy etc.

What can schools do to develop a stronger partnership with Skyline?

- Work with Skyline to support parents
- Leverage Skyline contribution through active and knowledgeable teachers
- Encourage Skyline alumni to return to the school





What could Skyline do to further support schools?

Apply the model of collective impact to:

- Support networks of High-Ability Practice Leaders across schools with information based on our experience.
- Provide support for high ability students who will not be reached through the Student Excellence program after Yr 8
- Encourage Skyline alumni to work with their schools to encourage students to see the opportunities for broader pathways
- Encourage innovative thinking among teachers to support entrepreneurial thinking by students. 'Innovation teachers' as well as Careers teachers
- Source online offerings: master classes can support networking with organisations like CSIRO. Students can have mentors online

NEXT STEPS

Skyline will work with principals, schools and teachers to develop greater understanding of their needs in order to provide support to them and their students.

This could be in a side box.

In attendance

Tina Reddrop, Patron Skyline

Anthony Gartner, Swinburne University and member Futures Committee

Helen Worlidge, CEO Boroondara Chances

Vicky Argyropoulos, Assistant Principal Dandenong HS

Melinda Pepprell, Dandenong HS

Matthew Laaksonen, Keysborough SC

Jeremy Ludowyke, Principal Melbourne HS

Roger Page, Principal Nossal HS

Gypsy Akhyar, Skyline alumnus, current University of Melbourne Science student

Jane Sydenham-Clarke, CEO Skyline

Annie Harper, Program manager, Skyline

Alison Gibson, Board member

Bev Brock, Board member

Skyline Futures Committee

Elizabeth Hartnell-Young

Dahle Suggett

Adrian Gartner

Fred Clarke (apologies)