



THE RUBIK'S CUBE OF YEAR 10 SUBJECT SELECTION

Just when you think you have mastered the business of 'schooling' along comes 'subject selection'. If you have a child in year 10 and you are in Australia, then hopefully your school has been preparing both of you by dispelling the mystery around a process which at first glance seems as complex as a Rubik's cube. But don't despair because this can be an exciting time to get to know your son or daughter on a deeper level and help them begin to visualise their future beyond the school gate.

The first thing to keep in mind is that there are many pathways available to suit the differing needs of students. Most schools offer a combination of HSC subjects, vocational education subjects or Life Skills to complete their secondary schooling. This is the time to give some thought to the best pathway for your child so having a deep discussion with them about their interests, hopes and capabilities is a good idea. You might be surprised to find out they are more interested in cooking than algebra, or construction than Shakespeare! Following their interests will keep them engaged and motivated and could lead to some interesting career options in the future.

Sometimes parents and students base their subject selections on assumptions or misinformation about how subjects 'rank' or get the highest score in the HSC. While it is important to be aware of the mark your child needs to achieve if they wish to follow a particular career path (e.g. physiotherapy), avoid making choices solely based on achieving the highest marks.

And remember, not all students are headed for university. In fact, a recent FYA report, *The New Work Reality*, found that while 60% of 25-year-olds surveyed had a post-school qualification, half of them were unable to secure full-time employment. So, choosing subjects that build enterprise and optimism and prepare them for growth industries may lead to longer-term gains.

Schools will guide you through the process of choosing the subjects that your child will be taking for the Higher School Certificate. There is a complex and often 'secret' formula to the timetabling once they have chosen their subjects which may have an impact on what they can study.

This is of particular relevance in regional schools or smaller schools where the choice of subjects may not be as broad and plentiful as other schools. But there are ways to overcome this if you can work with your school to explore online options or partnerships with other schools and distance options.

So how should you approach this important stage of your child's educational journey? Good advice is to do your homework before making final decisions.

Start by having a learning conversation with your child:

- Aim for a deep discussion about their own perceptions of careers they may wish to pursue, resist imposing your own ideas or desires on your child.
- Ask them what they see as their strengths and talents, (for example are they good at mediating their friends or helping younger children on the playground, do they love social media and making creative posts?)
- Ask them to think about movies they have loved like *The Wedding Planner*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Law and Order*, *Border Control*, which may provide a clue to their likes and dislikes.
- Find out where they have already experienced success (like volunteering to do the sound for the school musical).
- Above all encourage your son or daughter to think about 'why' they are choosing the subjects they do and how they will serve them in the future (e.g. drama and art promote strong project planning skills)
- Check out youtube and podcasts that will interest your child (Simon Sinek is currently trending with *Start with Why*)

Then venture a little further afield:

- Talk with your child to friends, colleagues, practitioners like the local pharmacist as sources of knowledge on careers that might interest them.
- Inform yourself and your child about career options by visiting websites like www.myfuture.com.au which has tools for profiling your child and possible career directions.
- Attend the information sessions hosted by the school, where you will gain valuable insight into how the system works and what is available through the school.
- Make an appointment with the school's careers adviser.
- Find out what the pre-requisites are for the university program they wish to undertake.
- Seek out careers expos and take your child along to them.
- Investigate TAFE and VET options – would a school-based apprenticeship suit your child better than an academic course?

Making decisions that won't take effect for the next 4 or 5 years can seem daunting but adopting a future focussed approach will pay off. FYA research has found that new careers are opening up all the time. The demand for digital skills has increased by more than 200% since 2012, critical thinking more than 150% and creativity 60% so be open to new-style careers such as online influencers which may seem implausible to you but trust that your child has more insight into the trends of the future. Most importantly, take time to enjoy this next stage of your child's education journey and share in their excitement about their future.

Linda McNeil is a NESAs endorsed provider of parent engagement professional development for in-service and pre-service teachers. She can deliver PD in staff meetings, Director's meetings and full-day or half-day workshops. Visit www.lindamcneil.com.au to book now.