



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: OnDigital Australia
Submitting as a: Academic person or institution, other (We are a digital organisation working in the education sector with leading academics)
State: Vic.

Summary

SchoolTV has been developed in association with some of Australia's leading minds to focus on better more engaged parenting. As a unique information and educational channel made available to parents through their schools, SchoolTV has demonstrated a significant impact on student wellbeing and academic performance. This has been delivered from greater parental support and involvement in the lives of young people. The platform must be made available to all schools and this can only be achieved through a mass Departmental offering.

Main submission

We represent a new Digital Parent Information Platform called SchoolTV, designed and supported by some of Australia's leading academics, educators, technologists and adolescent psychologists. It is the result of over 2 years of development and was launched across Australia in early 2017.

The platform has been highly successful and now represents 300 schools which is anticipated to grow to 1000 schools by the end of 2018. Recently the platform was recognised for its positive impact on both schools and parents and was awarded the Victorian Government iAward for innovation and impact on the education sector.

The SchoolTV Wellbeing Platform is a world first development that directly focuses on the fundamental importance of better, more informed parenting and its influence on improved educational outcomes. The reality is, today's parents and schools face unprecedented challenges in raising happy, healthy and resilient young people.

SchoolTV is the direct result of a growing need that reveals a major gap in a parent's understanding and ability to deal with modern-day issues facing young people. Recent research reveals that as much as 70% of parents don't feel adequately

equipped or educated in dealing with today's youth issues such as anxiety, self-harm, alcohol and drug use, pornography and multitude of online issues.

SchoolTV is uniquely delivered to parents via their respective schools. It greatly supercharges schools resources and empowers their parent communities across mental, physical, nutritional and social wellbeing knowledge.

As the first measurable user wellbeing platform, SchoolTV addresses head-on the many modern-day realities faced by both schools and parents who increasingly need clear, relevant and fact-based information around raising safe, happy and resilient young Australians.

Whilst there is a great deal of information available, this can often be confusing and overwhelming for parents looking for guidance towards the wellbeing of their children.

We believe that the role of 'good parenting' in Australia today, is fundamental to achieving educational excellence in Australian schools. We believe with a passion that there needs to be a re-focus on parent education and support at a time when we are witnessing increasing levels of youth suicide and self-harm and mental health issues, especially anxiety. More and more, SchoolTV is being recognised by major Australian authorities as perhaps the most effective digital resource platform to meet this challenge. It is also the first resource to measure impact thus allowing schools to focus further resourcing on problem areas.

Educational performance is falling

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), measures the global ranking of student performance in mathematics, reading and science, on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA is a worldwide exam administered every three years that measures 15 year olds in 72 countries. About 540,000 students took part in the exam in 2015. The results demonstrated that Australia's average scores have fallen. An average of 16 other countries are outperforming Australia in educational ability.

Whilst there are many possible reasons for this concerning ranking, we believe, and have proven, that the influence of parenting has a fundamental role to play in educational outcomes.

Parental engagement in education is about parents and carers being positively involved in their child's learning, wellbeing, social life and school community. Good parenting and family life is, without doubt, the most important thing in any child's education. The earlier parents feel informed and become engaged, the better the child's outcome is.

"Nothing has greater importance or influence on education than good parenting."

About the SchoolTV Platform

SchoolTV is the direct result of a growing need expressed by both schools and parents. Some of Australia's leading academics, specialists and organisations have come together to create a new and effective way to influence and enhance parenting. SchoolTV has been formed from the input of Dr Michael Carr-Gregg, Prof. Jane Burns (Young & Well CRC), Professor Pat McGorry (Orygen) and Prof. Ian Hickie (Brain & Mind Centre) plus numerous others.

SchoolTV is not designed to be yet "another wellbeing platform" like BeyondBlue, ReachOut, Headspace or others, rather it complements these and aggregates their content into one single and powerful resource designed for parents which is distributed through their individual school.

Our research continues to demonstrate that 7 in 10 parents do not feel adequately informed or capable of dealing with a wide range of challenges in raising their children. Interestingly, these concerns have shifted to the much earlier years of primary level, indicating that parents are wanting clear and accessible information earlier in their child's education.

SchoolTV has been designed to address these issues and empower parents with a new level of understanding.

"There is strong evidence that parent engagement is associated with improvements in academic attainment for students of all ages. The evidence confirms the importance of valuing and supporting parent engagement in learning. Parent engagement in learning is known to lead to improved outcomes for students of all ages. Parents play an essential role as the first educators of children, and ongoing, active engagement of parents has a major impact on a child's success at school. For this reason 'Engaging parents in education' was one of the four pillars of the Australian Government's Students First approach for quality school education."

2016 Budget, Government Policy paper: Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes.

A new approach to better informed and empowered parenting

The SchoolTV Platform, launched in early 2017, has demonstrated a growth of 300% to date which encompasses many of Australia's leading independent schools, catholic dioceses and public schools across primary and secondary levels. From exclusive Melbourne Grammar School to a little known outback school in the Pilbara, SchoolTV is demonstrating significant levels of parent engagement.

It is the unique features and architecture of SchoolTV that is driving the increasingly high levels of access and readership.

SchoolTV Platform Features

The success of SchoolTV as a resource for parents is measured by their visitation and usage across monthly topics. The platform is offered as a school branded platform under the school's crest and incorporates the individual school's wellbeing officer or counsellor. This has been highly successful as it wraps immediate credibility around the content being published.

SchoolTV offers schools and their parents the following:

Ten fully branded and published digital editions annually from February to November

Coverage across major topics and the ability for schools to customise content

Exclusive interviews from leading authorities

Aggregated content into a single stream from major organisations such as BeyondBlue

An integrated area for the school counsellor or wellbeing officer

Comprehensive measurement of platform usage

Surveying ability

Easy access via smartphone, tablet and desktop

SchoolTV Topics (to date)

Topics have been selected based on parent and school need. A foundation of content has addressed four major and fundamental sectors most requested by parents and schools as identified in our research. This includes the 'Mental Health Series,' 'Cyber-Safety Series,' 'School Survival Guide' and 'Healthy Body Series'.

Parents can access content, such as pornography or anxiety, when they need to and saving parents precious time scouring through countless websites and other material to find the content they need. SchoolTV content can also be utilised to generate a connection with school the counsellor who perhaps previously had no preventative voice to parents and only communicated when an issue or concern was raised.

Our Relationship to MindMatters and the existing 'Student Wellbeing Hub'

The Department of Education and Training has made some exciting developments in the area of student wellbeing with the 'Student Wellbeing Hub' (SWH), which is underpinned by the National Safe Schools Framework.

SchoolTV designed to be complementary to the SWH, and certainly MindMatters. SchoolTV is a powerfully engaging digital platform that acts as an aggregator of many sources of valuable content, but fundamentally, it's proving to be an influential resource with high parent usage.

Australia's leading names have come together to support the SchoolTV resource. Many leading experts and organisations have come together to contribute to the SchoolTV platform. They are passionate for the need to reboot parenting knowledge and engagement levels with today's youth. These specialists, like the majority of school principals, believe a new platform of direct communication to parents and families is critically needed. Their desire to be actively involved and share their knowledge, is testament to the importance of the platform.

SchoolTV - partners and content providers. Results to date and impact

By any measure, the SchoolTV platform is a success and has achieved significant, sustainable and cut-through engagement with schools and parents. Parents are visiting content multiple times and for extended periods of time. This is seen across all devices, but predominantly desktop (71%). The most editions accessed include youth anxiety, depression, internet addiction, pornography and drug and alcohol use. (Currently around 200,000 parents access SchoolTV.)

* Current as of October 1, 2017

SchoolTV - A Snapshot Review Scope

In the context of this 'Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools,' SchoolTV as a new and successful resource for schools and their parents, is focused predominately on the increasing importance of better informed and engaged parents. This is based on research that demonstrates the importance of 'good' parenting and its impact on young people's educational outcomes.

To positively impact across all schools and parents, we seek funding to further introduce the SchoolTV to all Australian schools, as an individually branded and measurable resource.

Submission Questions

What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

Educational success is not just about the school or end results achieved, but also about a student's sense of achievement, self-pride and acknowledgement. The transition from school into university, TAFE or indeed the world outside of school, requires a positive attitude and self-belief. These are all qualities that must be effectively passed and instilled onto young people by their parents.

The SchoolTV Platform will provide ongoing guidance to parents and how they can effectively deal with the many challenges facing young people. Our research across some 300 schools reports many positive changes in youth wellbeing. The following outcomes in students are indicative only and demonstrate how parents who are

better informed and therefore more engaged with their children change academic excellence significantly:

Reduced anxiety levels from primary level through to middle and secondary years

Improved sense of self belief and value by the child

Increased physical, mental and emotional levels

Greater parent/child communication and involvement directly impacts on student academic performance. Students place this communication above any school influence. It is universally accepted by educators that the conversations parents have with their children change as children grow older, the effect of these exchanges on academic achievement remains incredibly influential and strong

What can we do to improve and how can we support ongoing improvement over time?

The introduction of a content rich, independent and fact-based resource platform specifically aimed at parents via their own schools. Schools currently offer parents ineffectual speaker evenings that do little to support parents 'when' they need information. There is also content overload currently offered inside and outside schools that is both negative in nature and extremely fragmented.

We believe schools and/or Education Departments should budget funds to resource better parent education. This resource is SchoolTV and it has the ability to customise parent information by topic, faith, location, academic level and students with disadvantages.

Specific actions:

Offer all schools access to a branded and measurable SchoolTV Parent Wellbeing Platform (as a Education Departmental offering)

Provide Departmental control of content distribution to schools and individual school control/customisation over content

Platform governance would come from both existing departmental sources and school bodies

SchoolTV allows distribution, usage standards and visitation targets to be enabled. The platform also for the first time provides a 'parent content access' barometer. This integrates multiple measurement parameters to be used

SchoolTV as a channel can easily provide additional or enhanced content into school curriculums allowing teachers to also influence the social, mental and physical wellbeing of young people.

Are there barriers to implementing these improvements?

Whilst an average of 96% of school adopt the SchoolTV Platform upon seeing it, it is impossible to make it available to all schools across Australia school by school. We desperately need meet the obvious need from parents and schools with this unique and powerful resource. A departmental approach would allow mass participation by all schools in Australia and powerful analytics and well as surveying capability.

The SchoolTV Platform has been comprehensively beta tested across hundreds of schools and thousands of parents. Offered to schools as an annual subscription of just \$2,750 for the Standard Package, SchoolTV takes approximately 30 minutes to deploy in a school. In addition, each topic (10 editions per year), is supported by monthly marketing and social media support resulting in schools not having to allocate any extra resourcing.

Schools can customise content from SchoolTV at any time to fit their unique wellbeing program.

“SchoolTV is a world first wellbeing platform that addresses the modern day realities faced by schools and parents who increasingly need clear, relevant and fact-based information around raising safe, happy and resilient young people. Whilst there is a great deal of information available, this can often be confusing and overwhelming for parents looking for guidance. SchoolTV addresses this as a new online resource designed to empower parents with credible, sound information with realistic and practical strategies”

“Clearly this is something thats directly improving mental and academic outcomes in our kids!...”

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg.