

Parental Engagement

Supporting children's learning at home

Progressing Parental Engagement School Fact Sheet

Supporting children's learning at home

Parental engagement recognises the important role that both parents and teachers play in developing positive attitudes towards learning and education for children, building their motivation and confidence as learners, and fostering their enjoyment of learning.

This fact sheet aims to assist schools in supporting parents in their child's learning at home.

Supporting children's learning at home

Learning is not limited to the classroom.

The beliefs, expectations and experience of parents are a powerful determinant in a student's achievement.

Given the benefits of parental engagement it is important for schools to consider their strategies for assisting families to boost home-learning conditions to support student academic achievement.

Involving families with their children's homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions recognises that the school, home and community all play a role in the holistic environment within which children learn.

Barriers to parental engagement

Some parents don't engage in their child's education, and it is important to understand why. Barriers for parents include the following:

- Some parents feel intimidated and uncertain at school. Many parents have had negative school experiences themselves or are so unfamiliar with the school culture that they do not want to get involved or feel unsure about how to get involved, or whether their contributions will be valued
- Tension in relationships between parents and teachers
- A belief that teachers wait too long to tell parents about a problem and only make contact around bad news
- Some parents feel unwelcome at school, believing schools don't really want their input. Communication is a one-way process - schools send out information, but parents have few, if any, opportunities to share their ideas
- Families are not sure how far they can go in making suggestions or asking questions. They worry their children might be punished for their parents' actions by a teacher or principal feeling annoyed or threatened by the parent.

Some considerations for schools to reflect on include:

- How can schools support parents to be positively involved with their child's learning, at home and at school?
- How can teachers and parents work together to help children learn?
- How does the school find out what would help parents?
- How can the school leverage community, industry and business knowledge and skills?
- Are there opportunities to develop partnerships with parents or the community that could deliver more innovative models of partnership development, education and training?
- How do teachers seek to understand and learn about students, including their home and community contributions, their culture and what contributions it makes?

Potential strategies to support children's learning at home:

- Have regular and ongoing ways of finding out what parents need to engage with their child's learning
- Include practical literacy and numeracy activities that involve parents in homework
- Provide parents with information about where students are up to in their learning, what progress they have made over time and what parents might do to support their child's further learning
- Develop kits and resources to help families work with children at home
- Provide parent/teacher workshops targeting areas of need or interest such as student resilience, literacy and numeracy
- Involve families in setting goals for their children's learning (personalised learning plans)
- Embed the practice of involving parents in goal setting and career planning discussions with their children
- Develop local strategies to support transitions between early childhood education and care, primary school and secondary school, higher education and the workforce.

CASE STUDY:

Breakfast Club Helps Parents to Support their Child's Literacy Learning

A classroom at Charnwood-Dunlop School has transformed into a café learning environment named the *Active Brain Café*. The café provides a relaxed reading environment, in which families can read together and enjoy a nutritious breakfast from 8.30am each morning.

Teachers work side by side with parents, coaching them in how to support students in literacy learning activities.

The café has invigorated a partnership between the school and local charity organisation, The Smith Family, with assistance from The Salvation Army and Northside Community Centre. It has also created stronger links with Melba Copland Secondary School who painted the café.

<http://www.det.act.gov.au/parents-and-students-at-the-centre/charnwood>



Research and resources

There is a wide body of research available which supports the need for effective parental engagement strategies. Several Australian guides are provided here for reference.

Family – School Partnerships Framework – A guide for schools and families

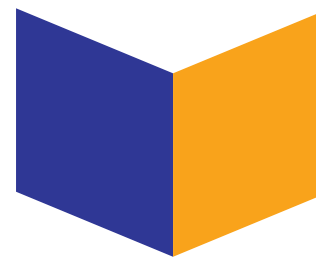
http://www.familyschool.org.au/files/3013/8451/8364/Family-school_partnerships_framework.pdf

References

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<http://www.projectappleseed.org/#!/barriers/c1tzy>

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About this project

The ACT Education and Training Directorate partnered with the non-profit Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), The Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, the Catholic School Parents Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn and the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools. Together, the alliance developed a shared understanding of parental engagement in the ACT, based on what the evidence shows has the biggest impact and the things that matter most to ACT families and schools. The international evidence has been reviewed and parents and teachers have been consulted on what is important to them.

Our Partners

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More resources will be available in 2015.

