

Progressing Parental Engagement Parent Fact Sheet

Communicating with your child's school

When families and schools work together, children are more likely to build good relationships and do better at school. There are simple things you can do at home, and with your child's school, to help your child to do their best.

Teachers are experts in learning and can help you to help your child learn. To work together, parents and teachers should try to build a positive relationship based on mutual respect and understanding of each others' role, knowledge and expertise.

Communicating about your child's wellbeing, their progress at school and ways you can help is at the heart of parental engagement partnerships. Good communication between parents and teachers gets everyone on the same page.

So it's okay to ask for advice about how to help your child or ask questions about what's happening at school. It also helps teachers to know if there is anything outside school that may be affecting your child.

This fact sheet includes some tips for communicating with your child's school.

Getting to know your child's teacher

Parents and teachers are important partners in supporting a child's learning. Having a good relationship with your child's teacher will help you get to know what your child is learning and how they are going. It will help you work together if your child needs some extra support and will help you celebrate with your child when they do well. And it helps show your child how much you care about their learning.

You don't have to be at school every day to get to know your child's teacher – you can talk over the phone or email, or ask grandparents, aunts, uncles or important people in your child's life to help.

- Get to know the names of your child's teacher, the principal, and other staff at your child's school
- Make a time to meet with your child's teacher to get to know them and to help them get to know your family. You can talk about your goals and aspirations for your child, what helps them learn, the things they are good at, the things they love doing and learning, and what would help you to be engaged in their learning
- Ask about the best way to get in touch if you have questions
- Simple ways to stay in touch include face-to-face meetings, email and phone contact during agreed contact hours.

What's happening in the classroom?

It can be difficult to know what is happening in your child's classroom, but it's helpful to know what the plan is and the kinds of things your child will be learning.

- Find out if your school provides families with a curriculum or learning plan for your child's class. See if there is a weekly timetable that you can easily refer to at home
- Ask your child's teacher to give the parents in your classroom a list of the work they are covering at school every few weeks
- Use this information to facilitate conversations with your child about how school is going, to help them plan their study time, or to find movies, games, books or activities that relate to what they are learning at school.

What's happening at school?

As well as asking for information or feedback from teachers, you can keep up to date with what's happening within the school community.

- Keep an eye on the information the school sends home – which might be through emails, notes, newsletters, website updates, Facebook, Twitter or mobile apps.

How is my child going?

You don't have to wait for your child's school report if you have questions about how they are going or if you think they might need some extra help.

- Ask your child's teacher about their learning goals for the class and your child, and talk about how you will know if they are on-track
- Ask your child's teacher to let you know if your child has any significant achievements or important breakthroughs – so you can praise small achievements as well as big ones
- Set up a time to talk if you have any questions or concerns
- All children will have trouble with learning at some point. If you are concerned, or if the teacher raises a concern, having a conversation about the issue is an important first step. You can work with the school to come up with a plan. You can ask for specific information about what you can do to help, what the school will do, and how you will keep track of progress.

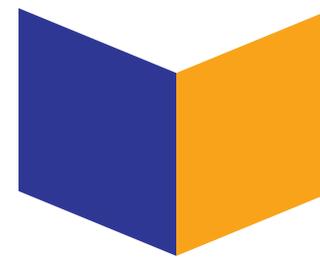
Being part of your school community

One of the best things you can do to help your child be a confident and enthusiastic learner is to show and tell your child that you believe learning is important and that you believe in your child.

Being part of your child's school community is one way of showing them that you value their education. Not all parents are able to volunteer at school every week – and that's okay. The *What You Can do at Home* fact sheet provides lots of other strategies for being engaged in your child's learning. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and other important people in your child's life can come along to school events, and even participating in a couple of activities each year can mean a lot.

Tips for getting involved in your school community

- Volunteering – if you'd like to be involved in your child's classroom or school but don't know how, you can ask how. Your child's school might have a volunteer register, or you can ask your child's teacher about ways that you might be able to get involved in class activities, such as reading help, art activities, helping keep the classroom organised, or telling stories about your culture. There might be opportunities to help with school clubs, coaching sport or a 'working bee'
- Going to school meetings and events – attending concerts, plays, assemblies, meetings, and other activities is a good way to become familiar with your child's school community and to find out what is happening
- Being heard – if you have the time and desire, you can ask to be part of school committees. Attending school council meetings is a useful way to meet other parents, form friendships and to be part of the school culture
- Social activities with other parents and families can be a good way to be part of the school community.



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.

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More resources will be available in 2015.

