

Progressing Parental Engagement School Fact Sheet

Engaging with families of children with disability

What's in this Fact Sheet?

Information to help your school:

- Understand the Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Strengthen relationships with families and key stakeholders
- Develop and implement an Individual Learning Plan

Why is this information important?

Parents play a big role in helping their children to be confident and enthusiastic learners – helping kids believe they can do well at school, that trying hard and doing their best is important, as well as helping them be organised, to navigate challenges and solve problems. This is what is meant by parental engagement.

For schools, this means recognising that families and schools need to work together to support children's learning. There are many things schools can do to make families feel welcome, which is an important element of successful parental engagement.

Schools benefit through the effect of successful parental engagement on student learning outcomes and through improved family and community satisfaction with the school.

In the context of families of children with disabilities, parental engagement can support schools to identify students' strengths, identify and prioritise goals and solve issues collaboratively, ensuring that the child has the best possible opportunity for engaged learning.

Why should families and schools work in partnership?

Research has found that the benefits of effective family-school partnerships include a range of positive outcomes:

- student learning increases and educational outcomes are improved
- student behaviour management problems are reduced
- fewer student suspensions from school
- increased student attendance, retention and graduation rates
- parents and carers contribute more time and expertise to the school
- parents and carers are more supportive of school programs
- teachers have a comprehensive knowledge of students

- teacher morale increases
- teachers are more appreciative of parents and carers and their skills
- flow-on positive relationships between the school and the broader school community.

When schools and families work together they can identify and prioritise goals and solve problems collaboratively. When decisions are made collaboratively, everyone involved is more inclined to commit to student goals and objectives.

Tip 1: Understand the Disability Standards for Education

In Australia, all education providers including schools are required to comply with the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education). These Standards explicitly state that all educational institutions must consult with the student or an “associate” of the student regarding how a disability affects the student’s ability to access education or training. An associate could include a child’s parent, carer, or advocate. Schools are also required to consult when determining what adjustments will be made to support a child’s access to school.

The ACT Education and Training Directorate provide an online learning package and a face to face professional learning session on the Disability Standards for Education for all staff. Support is also provided by the Network Student Engagement Teams (NSET), and the Targeted Support Team (TST).

Tip 2: Strengthen Relationships

There are several important elements to an effective family-school partnership. These include good communication, commitment, trust and respectful relationships. **Good communication** can be developed through a clear and respectful approach to establishing and maintaining home school relationships, sharing of resources, and transparency of a school’s processes and practices for home-school communication. **Commitment** to making a partnership work involves being flexible, encouraging the child and family and being accessible to the child and family. In partnerships based on **trust**, adults will focus on being reliable and keeping the child safe. **Respectful** relationships involve being non-judgemental, being courteous, valuing the child and avoiding intrusion.

In addition to informal parent engagement opportunities such as school events, there are formal opportunities throughout the year to develop home-school relationships including Individual Learning Plan (ILP) development, ILP reviews and appraisal meetings. There are many formal and informal opportunities for schools and families to work together in meeting the needs of the individual child. Schools are encouraged to regularly communicate with families regarding their child’s progress and success stories.

Each school has a Disability Education Co-ordinator (DECO). The DECO offers support for families and staff in relation to meeting the needs of the individual child.

Tip 3: Develop and implement an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

An Individual Learning Plan is a working document developed through a collaborative planning process involving the school, parents/carers and other relevant services and agencies.

An ILP informs the planning, delivery and evaluation of an educational program. It is a teaching tool used to deliver a targeted educational program to achieve appropriate learning outcomes for identified students with specific needs. An ILP conversation is a good way to engage with the family of a child with disability, acknowledging that parents know and understand the strengths, goals and aspirations of their children. The Directorate provides a face to face professional learning session on the development and implementation of ILPs and a standard ILP template. Schools can access support and consultation through their NSET (see above).

Where can I find more information?

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013). 4429.0. Profiles of people with a disability. Summary: Children at School with a Disability.

Disability Standards for Education 2005: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2005L00767>

DSEonline Professional Learning: <http://dse.theeducationinstitute.edu.au/login/index.php>

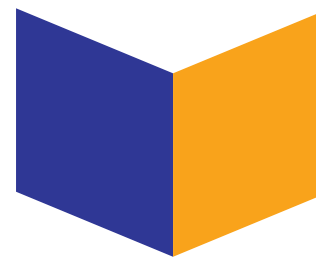
Engaging Schools Framework:

<https://index.ed.act.edu.au/teaching-and-engagement/resources-for-teachers/engaging-schools.html>

Resources for ACT Disability Education Programs:

<https://index.ed.act.edu.au/teaching-and-engagement/programs-and-services/disability-programs.html>

Australian Human Rights Commission: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights>



About this project

The ACT Directorate for Education and Training 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.

