

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

“The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families.

Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children’s education.

Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and are committed to the common purpose and goal of student-centred learning”

National School Improvement Tool (2012)

School Context

A one size fits all approach to parent Engagement is not feasible. Approaches and strategies need to remain specific to an individual school’s context. Context can include family and community characteristics, school size, family and student need, and family level of schooling, geographic location, socioeconomic data and cultural diversity.



Involvement or Engagement: what’s the difference?

While involving parents in school activities has important community and social benefits and helps to develop a welcoming and parent friendly school climate, the key to facilitating positive improvement in a child’s learning outcomes is the engagement of parents in learning outcomes at home and at school.

Involvement

Directed by the school/P&F, activities at school, teaching specific skills, families are spectators, fundraisers, volunteers and organisers.

School/P&F sets agenda and determines what roles families are to play.

Idea is “what families can do for the school”, rather than “what families and schools can do together for students”

Engagement

Engagement enables families to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children.

Family’s knowledge and teacher/school knowledge inform decision making and the intended outcomes for children, families and the school.

Family capacity to support their child’s learning is a partnership approach. Families, schools and student need to form learning partnerships.

Access to information and support is inclusive to family type and need, and available to parents both at and outside the school.

Families can be engaged both at school and at home.

Collaborative Relationships

- ✚ Make parent engagement activities meaningful, relevant and authentic so parents consider it worthy of their time
- ✚ Acknowledge different parenting styles and family outcomes
- ✚ Keep the partnerships going through ongoing communication and dialogue with communication targeted where parents access it.
- ✚ Make outreach inclusive, reaching out to all parents, especially those who may not feel included in the life of the school
- ✚ Build positive relationships and create a welcoming school climate

Tips for parent engagement focused on student learning

As schools and boards reflect on their parent engagement strategies for the months and years ahead, four guiding principles may be helpful to consider:

1. Foster and sustain a positive, welcoming school climate in which all parent perspectives are encouraged, valued and heard.
2. Identify and remove barriers to parent engagement that may prevent some parents from fully participating in their children's learning.
3. Support parents with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to support student learning at home and at school.
4. Review and expand communication and outreach strategies such as local workshops, presentations, tools, and resources, to share information and strategies related to supporting learning at home and parent engagement in schools

References:

Capacity Building Series K-12: Parent Engagement
Ontario (2012)

Parent Engagement in Action: A practical guide and toolkit for schools (2013) Catholic Education Office Melbourne
<http://www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au/learning-teaching/parents-as-partners/fsp/?terms=parent+engagement+in+action>

