



Parent and community involvement

Fact sheet

Parent and community engagement is the interaction between schools, families and the wider community and the degree to which they are involved in the educational lives of the children (Constantino, 2006).

The formal and informal connections between the family and school are just as important for adolescents as they are for younger children. Such relationships provide parents with information they need to support their children's learning and success, convey parents' beliefs about the importance of education to teachers and students, and lay the foundation for all other forms of involvement (Cooper et al. 2001).

In addition, when families of diverse backgrounds are involved at the school level, teachers become more aware of cultural and community issues and, in turn, become more likely to engage and reach out to parents in meaningful and effective ways (Domina, 2005; Marschall, 2006).

Why is it important?

There is a growing body of research to show the importance of engaging parents, families and the community in education.

The research shows that all families, regardless of their background, 'if given the tools', can help bring about improved outcomes for their children (Mapp, 2004).

Mapp also reports that the programs and interventions which engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher achievement and that family engagement in their children's learning is 'critically important'.

Recent analysis of 800 school-community partnerships in Australia found that these partnerships had brought a wide range of benefits to schools, including improved student engagement and academic outcomes, enhanced physical and emotional wellbeing, and increased vocational skills, pathways and opportunities (Lonsdale, 2011).

Key messages

Traditionally family involvement in a child's education decreases dramatically throughout adolescence. There is an overwhelming body of evidence that clearly makes the link between parental involvement/engagement and student achievement, school completion and a greater likelihood of post-secondary education.

Partnerships with local businesses and organisations have the potential to enrich learning experiences for students, broaden perspectives for potential career pathways and support the social and emotional development of adolescent learners.

Examples of practice

- Promote parent participation in school events and provide opportunities for families to observe student learning and celebrate student achievement
- Use multiple communication channels to communicate with parents including email, SMS telephone, web portal and letters
- Provide programs and opportunities (e.g. literacy workshops, guest speakers) for parents to build their capacity to support their child's learning
- Actively seek and develop a wide range of community partnerships aimed at meeting the needs of junior secondary students e.g. youth and mental health related organisations, sporting clubs, local businesses, educational institutions (universities, TAFE, training providers).

Lonsdale, M. (2011) 'School-community partnerships in Australian schools', Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation, Australian Council for Educational Research, http://research.acer.edu.au/policy_analysis_misc/7

Cooper, H., Jackson, K., Nye, B., & Lindsay, J. J. (2001). A model of homework's influence on the performance evaluations of elementary school students. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 69(2), 181-199.

Domina, T. (2005). Leveling the home advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in elementary school. *Sociology of Education*, 78(3), 233-249.

Marschall, M. (2006). Parent involvement and educational outcomes for Latino students. *Review of Policy Research*, 23(5), 1053-1076.