**Principal Leadership for Parent-School-Community Engagement – Video Transcript**

Our children and young people are growing up in a rapidly changing world. It's no small task to meet their needs at school and to prepare them for the future. Our educators need up-to-date research to guide their decisions and inform what they do in schools and classrooms every day.

The Queensland Department of Education values and relies on research done in state schools that aligns with our focus on school improvement. We use it to shape our policy and practice, it helps us understand what's most effective and how we can replicate best practice across our system.

One research project that's having an impact was funded by the Department of Education and led by researchers at The University of Queensland, working in partnership with P&Cs Queensland. Researchers looked at schools that are particularly successful at engaging parents, caregivers and the community in their children's learning.

We know from the research that when there are strong connections between schools, families and communities that students tend to perform better academically and also in terms of their well-being. We were interested to understand how principals were building those links. When we looked at different schools we found that there were commonalities between what effective engagement looked like, sounds like, and feels like. Engagement looks like frequent contact and communication between school staff and parents and this happens in formal and informal ways but what we found was that it was intentional.

Here at Gaven State School, we make every opportunity to contact and involve our parents in school activities. We have a sort of visibility rule so we try to get all our administrators and teachers visible. I get out as much as I can and talk to parents in the school grounds, outside classrooms, so that they know who you are, they know you as a human being.

It's about taking all of those little moments with the parents and carers and making them a positive experience for them to then come back to you. It may be something they can contribute.

We found that engagement sounds like invitations, so not just invitations to come in and help in the classroom but invitations to parents to share their unique knowledge of their child so that together the teachers and the parents can work towards shared goals for the child's learning.

When I have an opportunity to meet parents first up, I always stated that I'm not just enrolling your child, I'm actually enrolling you, because I'd like to really work with you because you're trusting me to have your child and I want to do the best that I can do and then my staff the same. That's engagement for me, versus participation.

And engagement feels like authentic relationships. Mutual trust and respect are built through that regular contact and open invitations. So when this happens the schools become real communities where parents feel welcomed and included and their contributions are valued and seen as valuable.

I walk through the school and all the teachers know your name. They ask how you are, they talk to the children. They don't think they're above anybody. It's just a friendly school.

One of the most important things that I find in this school is how we as parents feel just as important as the children. You know I come to assemblies every week, we get told lots of information. Not only do the children thrive here but the parents feel very comfortable.

We love it here, the kids love it here, all the staff know all the kids by name, the kids know all the staff by name. They see each other at a local shopping center and it's hello and chat, and so there's a real building of relationship.

We found that principals play a key role in building engagement culture by modeling these dispositions and practices. They engage with parents on a daily basis and work with community and stakeholders to improve the learning and well-being of students and their families. For example, Gaven State School run a number of school and community meetings to engage parents, teachers and community in school decision-making, such as setting future priorities and developing visioning and value statements.

Other principals take parents on tours of the school where they get to talk to the parents about their children, about their families and they hear about the siblings and other members of the family, so they already have opened the relationship bank account and have a really nice rich understanding of the families that are coming to their school.

The benefits to us of being involved in the research is that it's reinforced the good practices we're doing and it's made us more conscious of those within the whole-school community.

What's really exciting about this research is that we're now developing a toolkit of strategies to help other schools with ideas for engaging parents and communities to enhance student learning and well-being.

It’s projects like these, happening across Queensland state schools, that are helping to give our students the best chance of succeeding at school and beyond.

To find out more, visit Research Services at <www.qld.gov.au/DETresearch>.