



Ways for schools and teachers to support parents to engage in their child's learning

Effective parent engagement is beneficial to successful student learning and wellbeing outcomes. Genuine parent engagement exists when there is a meaningful relationship between parents and teachers with the shared goal of maximising learning and wellbeing outcomes for students.

While different strategies and approaches work for different teachers and families, here are some ideas for your school and classrooms.

Whole school ideas

- ▶ **Invite parents and families to attend school assemblies.** Make parents and families feel welcome. Use assemblies as a way to communicate important information to parents, and to recognise the achievements of students.
- ▶ **Encourage parents to become involved in the school's P&C.** Promote the important role that the school's P&C Association plays in supporting the school to maximise learning. Promote P&C meetings, especially when important issues are scheduled for discussion. Encourage new members and aim to achieve representation from a broad cross-section of parents and families, including those from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of skills and experience.
- ▶ **Value diversity.** Families and communities come in all shapes and sizes. Understanding the diversity and strengths of your community is a starting point to reflect on the needs and opportunities of the school community. Ensure the school reflects the inclusion of a range of diverse abilities, skills, cultures and strengths.
- ▶ **Promote opportunities for parents to become involved in school activities,** such as sports days, swimming

carnivals, excursions, and school plays. Provide parent volunteers with an opportunity to be involved in both the formal and informal aspects of the activity, including liaising with staff.

- ▶ **Provide parents with regular newsletters.** Ensure newsletters are engaging and in a format which is readily accessible. Consider including feature articles of interest to parents as well as important school news and events, and student achievements.
- ▶ **Provide parents with clear information about school policies, programs, reforms and assessments.** Ensure this information is provided in a clear and accessible way. Regular snippets of key policies or programs in newsletters can be a useful strategy. Consider translating this information to languages other than English where appropriate.
- ▶ **Ensure that there is visibility of the leadership team and support staff** such as learning support teachers. This provides parents with opportunities to put faces to names and enables them to become comfortable chatting with a variety of staff at the school.
- ▶ **Value volunteers and active citizens.** Provide access and ideas for volunteers to get involved in school activities and contribute their skills to a broad range of activities.

Classroom ideas

- ▶ **Clearly communicate the ways in which parents can get in touch with you.** Whether it be by email, phone or face-to-face meetings, make sure parents have a clear understanding of the best way and times to communicate with you. Consider the needs of families who may have diverse communication needs, such



as families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, parents with disability, working families, and single parents.

- ▶ **Host parent information sessions.** These could have a particular focus, such as a topic that parents are keen to learn more about, or a topic that the students are learning, as a way to help parents understand and assist their children. Sessions may also serve as a way for parents to get to know teachers and other parents. Hosting information sessions at the start of the school year can be a useful way of introducing yourself to parents.
- ▶ **Create a family friendly class environment.** Encourage family involvement in the classroom. Make families important in your class – show them you value their time by explaining the best way they can help as a classroom volunteer. Invite parents to share their expertise, skills and experience with the class.
- ▶ **Be transparent in your communication with parents.** Be open to questions and concerns, and be prepared to respond to these in an honest and respectful manner. Work closely with the parents in the spirit of partnership and shared goals for the student. Make sure parents feel listened to and their efforts in engaging with their child's learning are valued and supported.
- ▶ **Support parents to assist their children with homework.** Provide assistance for parents in the form of handouts, information sessions, face-to-face meetings or even YouTube videos to assist them to support their child with their homework. This is particularly relevant for subjects like maths and science which can become complex and require explanation to understand problem solving techniques. Handouts could be electronic and provide links to online sources of help that parents can explore with their children. Communicate in plain English and don't use jargon.
- ▶ **Encourage parents to set appropriate expectations for their children that will translate into success in the classroom.** Children that think they are able to improve and achieve are more successful than children who don't believe this. Encourage parents to talk with their children about their aspirations and dreams. Encourage parents to set high expectations of their children and to support them to be accountable and responsible for their actions.
- ▶ **Provide parents with opportunities to see what their child is learning in the classroom.** Hold open classroom afternoons where parents can come into the classroom to see where their child spends their days, and to look at some of their work books. Consider sending out a regular class newsletter that showcases student work and features what the students have been working on during the week or fortnight.
- ▶ **Invite parents to attend parent/teacher interviews.** Parent/teacher interviews should be held at least twice a year. Parents who are unable to attend scheduled interviews should be invited to attend at an alternate time that suits their schedule. Consider the specific cultural needs and communication preferences of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, as well as parents with disability.
- ▶ **Provide parents with advice and ideas regarding positive study environments,** including information about how best to assist with homework and other curriculum-based activities. Suggest a study routine and ideas on setting up a homework-friendly space, either at home, at a local library or at a school homework club.
- ▶ **Remember that although people may have different ways of doing things, all parents want what is best for their child.**

For more ideas, read the Department of Education's Parent and Community Engagement Framework available at <http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/parent-community-engagement-framework/>

