

Community collaboration

Schools do not exist in isolation – they are often the central hub of their community. Schools should leverage their position in the community to work together with other community members, for the benefit of all.

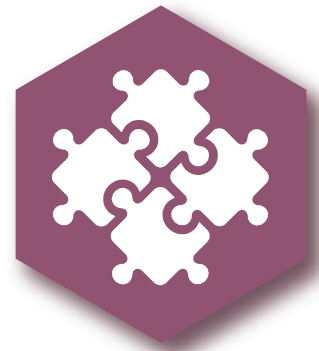
Effective collaboration provides opportunities for schools to develop a better understanding of their broader community and to build strong relationships within their local context.

Community members and organisations offer unique knowledge, expertise and perspectives that schools can use to enhance student wellbeing and make learning more authentic and connected.

Community approaches to improving learning make it possible for schools to form strategic partnerships with families and community organisations. This type of collaboration can help address issues external to the school and better support students' wellbeing and ability to come to school ready and able to learn.

Points to consider

- ▶ What are the key characteristics and strengths of the community (for example, demography, diversity, geographic location, local industries)?
- ▶ What can the community do to support the school in areas such as drug education, anti-bullying, civic responsibility and the development of social skills?
- ▶ What does the community, including local employers, expect from the school? How can they help students?
- ▶ How do community members/organisations show their commitment to working with the school? What is the purpose of the engagement?
- ▶ Has a genuine collaborative relationship been established between the school and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals?
- ▶ How can the school leverage community, industry and business knowledge and skills?
- ▶ Are there opportunities to develop relationships with the community that could deliver more innovative models of education and training?
- ▶ How does the school create clarity around roles and responsibilities in the relationships it forms with community organisations and groups?



Links with the NSIT

Community collaboration aligns with the following aspects of Domain 9 of the NSIT:

- ▶ Identifying and building community partnerships with local businesses and community organisations (including allied health, family support, counselling and rehabilitation services) to improve opportunities and outcomes for students.
- ▶ Planning community collaboration and developing commitment.
- ▶ Developing clarity around partner roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ Collecting evidence to evaluate whether partnerships are having their intended impact in improving outcomes for students.





Achieving results: Ideas for improvement

Early in the school year

- ☑ Collaborate with staff and parents to determine a school vision to address students' learning, health and wellbeing needs, and to identify members of the local community who could complement and support the school to achieve this vision.

Throughout the year

- ☑ Reach out to the local community to determine potential partners.
- ☑ Build networks that have the potential for long-term sustainability, for example:
 - establish a community integrated student support/health/early childhood services hub, including Child and Family Centres
 - link feeder primary schools with local high schools
 - establish connections with local businesses, tertiary providers, universities and sporting clubs.
- ☑ Establish relationships with community organisations, including disability organisations, to access expertise and perspectives that support improved learning and wellbeing outcomes for all students.
- ☑ Work with local community and business groups to develop shared policies and approaches to supporting effective learning and positive community outcomes - for example, anti-truancy measures or community volunteering.
- ☑ Develop relationships with key community personnel, for example, Elders to integrate cultural knowledge and protocols into the learning of staff and students.
- ☑ Work with local industry to develop opportunities to enhance student learning (for example, work experience and transition to work).
- ☑ If formalising a partnership with a community organisation, prepare meeting agendas and take minutes to record outcomes and actions.
- ☑ Include succession planning when developing partnerships, for example, who will continue the partnership and assist if the staff member transfers/retires.
- ☑ Consider options for guests to conveniently engage with the school for example, through online tools such as web conferencing or virtual classrooms.
- ☑ Consider how the school can formally recognise community partners or celebrate their mutual partnership.

Once a year

- ☑ Design, develop or review community collaboration strategies that support learning and wellbeing appropriate for students at different ages and stages of development.
- ☑ Invite local businesses to be involved in a 'careers expo' to showcase career opportunities to students.
- ☑ Use initiatives such as Mental Health week and Deadly Choices to invite health and wellbeing partners to present workshops for students, parents and teachers.

One-off

- ☑ Consider how successful past students can be involved in events such as award ceremonies or graduations.
- ☑ Establish school alumni to encourage ongoing support from past students, families and staff. This can be especially useful where alumni also represent local cultural communities (for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities).