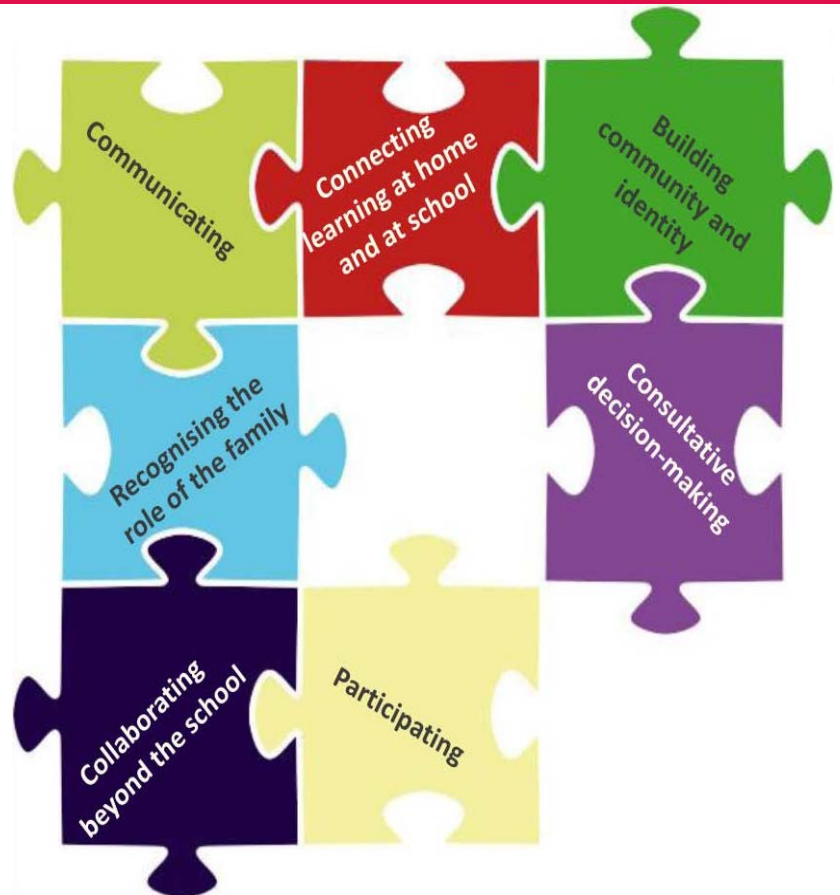


Strengthening family and community engagement Options resource for school communities



Legislation

[Education Act of 1990](#) lists P&C as a consultative body (Part 11)

[Parents and Citizens Association Incorporation Act 1976](#)

Policy

[Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians 2008](#)

[Australian Professional Standards for Teachers February 2011](#) (standards 3.7 and 7.3)

[Smarter Schools National Partnerships National Key Reform Projects - Final report The NSW AECG/DET Partnership Agreement 2010-2020: Together We Are, Together We Can, Together We Will School Excellence](#)



1. Communicating

Standard: Effective two-way communication between families and schools uses a range of strategies to regularly seek and share information about students' achievements and learning needs, school policies, practices and community initiatives.

Drivers

- Use a variety of communication methods to seek and share information, including interpreters as appropriate.
- Report student achievements in culturally sensitive and respectful ways.
- Consult with all families and community members to identify issues and concerns within in the school.
- Ensure that all families and community members have access to school leaders.

Assessment criteria

1. Families, the community and school staff communicate in numerous interactive ways, both formally and informally.
2. Schools, in collaboration with the parent representative body, offer information to families to assist them to participate collaboratively in parent teacher conversations.
3. Parent survey results are reflected in the school plans and situational analyses.
4. The school has formal and informal structures in place to support families and community members to have conversations with school leaders.

Options include:

- Positive phone calls from the school leadership team and teachers to families about students' achievements as well as school newsletters written in families' first languages.
- Technology used to communicate between home and school, including emails, blogs and SMS as well as informal and formal structures put in place to encourage families to initiate conversations with school leaders and class teachers.
- Professional learning activities for staff on ways to communicate with families and community members from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Staff employed or given responsibility for building relationships between families, community members and the school.
- Conducting a survey to assess communication needs.
- The placement of 'welcome' signs around the school.
- Reviewing current school practices on inviting families and community members to participate and consider how this could be improved.
- Working with families and community members to develop a handbook of information on school rules, policies, mission and goals, curriculum and assessment procedures. Hold a launch and publish on the school website or provide to new family and community members.
- Setting in place alternative methods of parent-teacher interviews when personal circumstances prevent parents from attending a face-to-face meeting, including options for telephone and email contact.

Resources to support schools

- [Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning resource](#) in particular, section 4 – strategies, case studies and resources and the *Resources for school communities* attachment
- [Employment of Paraprofessionals in NSW Government Schools Guidelines](#) (2015)
- [Family-School Partnerships Framework – A guide for schools and families \(2008\)](#)
- [Futures Learning Community Consultation toolkit](#)
- [Working with Aboriginal Communities](#) – A guide to community consultation and protocols (2008)
- [What Works – The Work program](#) sections include Conversations, Relationships and Partnerships (2008)
- [Interpreting and Translations](#)
- [Multicultural Education Policy](#)
- [Anti-Racism Policy](#)
- [Support for students with disability in regular classrooms: a factsheet for parents and carers](#)
- [Getting ready for school: A guide for parents of a child with a disability](#)

2. Connecting learning at home and at school

Standard: Families and school share responsibility for student learning and wellbeing. They work together to create positive attitudes to learning, develop shared understandings of how children learn and learning programs build on families' capacity to support learning at home.

Drivers

- Provide multiple opportunities for all families and teachers to discuss students' social and academic progress.
- Support families to participate in their child's learning.
- Develop families' understanding of learning programs and expected learning outcomes.
- Ensure smooth transitions for students and families at key points in the education continuum.

Assessment criteria

1. Teachers and families discuss students' individual learning styles, family cultural experiences, strengths and academic and personal needs to develop learning goals to support academic success at school and at home.
2. Teachers and parent representative body leaders plan regular family and community learning events at school and community locations.
3. Teachers and families have regular, scheduled discussions about how each school program or activity links to student learning.
4. A transition program developed by the school community supports families to feel connected and remain involved as their children progress through school.

Options include:

- Developing kits and resources to help families work with children at home.
- Involving families and community members in setting goals for their children's learning (personalised learning plans).
- Examining different ways in which families and community members can encourage, motivate and reinforce children's learning.
- Conducting cultural activities, including camps, for families, community members and students.
- Teachers using student tasks to involve families in student learning.
- Students, families and community members working together on projects such as murals, art shows and research projects.
- Using surveys to investigate the literacy/numeracy opportunities in the home.
- Reviewing the school's homework policy, with homework designed to guide parental support and provide tips for families on how they can monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Providing information for families on the skills required for students in all subjects at each Year level.
- Providing information and referral services to support parents in their role as parents.
- Providing cultural awareness training for school staff, students, families and community members.
- Providing school support for after-school care and activities.

Resources to support schools

- [Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning resource](#) in particular, section 4 – strategies, case studies and resources and the *Resources for school communities* attachment
- [Family-School Partnerships Framework – A guide for schools and families \(2008\)](#)
- [Working with Aboriginal Communities](#) – A guide to community consultation and protocols
- [What Works – The Work program](#) sections include Conversations, Relationships and Partnerships (2008)
- [Interpreting and Translations](#)
- [Multicultural Education Policy](#)
- [Anti-Racism Policy](#)

3. Building community and identity

Standard: School policies and practices, learning activities and community building initiatives have built a culture of welcome, inclusion and belonging that reflects and respects diversity within the school's community.

Drivers

- Develop strong relationships with all families and community members.
- Create a family-friendly school atmosphere.
- Facilitate connections between families and community members.
- Respect and celebrate the diversity within the school community.

Assessment criteria

1. The school provides opportunities to support families and community members become more engaged in school activities.
2. The school is a welcoming place where all families drop in and connect with school staff and other families.
3. The parent representative body and school staff have jointly developed programs to help parents connect with each other.
4. The school has collaborated with families and community agencies representing all backgrounds to improve cultural understandings.

Options include:

- Employing a community liaison officer to help families and community members become more engaged in school.
- Developing kits and resources to help families work with children at home.
- Involving elders and other significant community members in developing inclusive curriculum practices.
- Scheduling morning teas and other activities for families to meet staff, learn what is happening at school and celebrate children's learning.
- Developing ways in which the school can become a community resource e.g. adult learning, community meetings.
- Providing a place for potential students, families and community members of the school to meet and participate in school programs such as literacy learning and health care.
- Inviting local civic and service groups to become involved in the school in a variety of ways, such as mentoring students and speaking in classrooms.
- Support the development of community driven programs that assist to revive and maintain Aboriginal languages and cultures.
- Celebrating traditions, achievements and school milestones.

Resources to support schools

- [Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning resource](#) in particular, section 4 – strategies, case studies and resources and the *Resources for school communities* attachment
- [Family Diversity Checklist](#)
- [Family-School Partnerships Framework – A guide for schools and families \(2008\)](#)
- [Working with Aboriginal Communities](#) – A guide to community consultation and protocols
- [What Works – The Work program](#) sections include Conversations, Relationships and Formal Partnerships (2008)
- [Connecting Agencies: Meeting priorities together \(2011\)](#)
- [Interpreting and Translations](#)
- [Multicultural Education Policy](#)
- [Anti-Racism Policy](#)

4. Recognising the role of the family

Standard: School policies, practices and programs acknowledge families as partners in their children’s education. Schools recognise and build on the capacity of families to assist and encourage their children’s learning in and out of school and support school goals, directions and ethos.

Drivers

- Value and build on families’ knowledge of their children.
- Recognise and support the needs of families and community members.
- Remove barriers to family involvement.
- Acknowledge the critical role of families in their child’s learning.

Assessment criteria

1. Schools and families work together to develop strategies to use in the home to build on students’ strengths.
2. School, families and community agencies collaborate to develop a program of activities to support families.
3. The school collaborates with the parent representative body to review school and representative body policies and programs to ensure that barriers to family involvement are eliminated.
4. The school facilities and resources are made available outside school hours for homework and study.

Options include:

- School vision and mission statement explicitly refer to working in partnership with families and community members.
- Canvassing families for suggestions on how the school can support them in helping their children learn.
- Holding workshops on parenting related topics to assist families to support their children’s learning.
- Surveying families at the beginning of the year for information about their children to help teachers tailor their programs to reflect family needs and priorities.
- Developing a charter for parents that recognise the key role that family members play in their child’s learning.
- Developing and distributing a written policy, in consultation with the school community on family-school partnerships.

Resources to support schools

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- [Working with Aboriginal Communities](#) – A guide to community consultation and protocols
- [What Works – The Work program](#) sections include Conversations, Relationships and Formal Partnerships (2008)
- [Connecting Agencies: Meeting priorities together](#)
- [Who’s Going to Teach My Child? A guide for parents of children with special learning needs](#)
- [Getting ready for school: A guide for parents of a child with a disability](#)

5. Consultative decision-making

Standard: Families and community members are active contributors to school decision making and planning processes. They engage in relevant decisions about supporting student learning, school policy and practice and community building initiatives.

Drivers

- Ensure that all families have a voice in decisions that affect their children’s learning and engagement irrespective of socio-economic status, Aboriginality and cultural background or geographic location.
- Involve families and community members in whole-school planning and evaluation processes.
- Develop and support accessible structures and processes which enable families and community members to be consulted on key matters affecting the school.
- Build parent and community leadership capacity to support student learning.

Assessment criteria

1. Where possible, school policies ensure that parents have an equal voice in all relevant decisions that affect children’s learning.
2. The school provides multiple ways for families and community members to contribute to whole-school planning and evaluation processes.
3. Parent committee leaders participate in a leadership induction program and attend ongoing leadership training.
4. Parents are trained to co-facilitate parent workshops that build the knowledge and capacity of families and community members.

Options include:

- Developing a family-school-community agreement with families and community members. This agreement may include how it will build the school’s capacity to engage families, address barriers to their involvement, and coordinate involvement in other programs.
- The development of a Family-School Action Team to encourage families and community members involvement in school decision making processes.
- Creating a volunteer position for a parent to be a community partnerships coordinator.
- Providing different ways for families and community members to engage in discussions e.g. focus groups, community discussions, study circles.
- Developing a parent-school compact, or agreement, about how families and the school will collaborate to ensure children’s progress.
- Involving families in decisions about finance, curriculum and other aspects of school organisation and the development of school policies and programs.
- Pro-active approaches to broaden the involvement of all equity groups including rural and isolated groups in school decision making processes.
- Encouraging participation and engagement of families and community members in school governance through P&C, AECG, school plans, finance and other school committees.
- Creating advisory or consultative groups to support school leadership teams.
- School staff using a variety of strategies to engage in face-to-face discussions with families and community members.
- Teachers and families collaborating in the development and review of individual learning plans.

Resources to support schools

- [Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning resource](#)
- [Family-School Partnerships Framework – A guide for schools and families \(2008\)](#)
- [School Excellence Framework](#)
- [School Assessment Tool \(Reflection Matrix\)](#)
- [Tell Them From Me survey](#)
- [Futures Learning Community Consultation toolkit](#)
- [Connecting to Country](#)
- [Working with Aboriginal Communities](#) – A guide to community consultation and protocols
- [What Works – The Work program](#) sections include Conversations, Relationships and Partnerships (2008)
- [Interpreting and Translations](#)
- [Who’s Going to Teach My Child? A guide for parents of children with special learning needs :](#)

6. Collaborating beyond the school

Standard: The school has established on-going strategic relationships with government and non-government agencies, community groups, businesses and other educational providers which enhance learning opportunities and outcomes for students, families and community members.

Drivers

- Connect families and students with community resources.
- Provide families and community members with access to community resources.
- The wider community provides services which can strengthen and support schools, students, families and community members.
- Build capacity in community organisations to engage with the school and support families and community members.

Assessment criteria

1. School and community agencies help families and community members to better understand student options for additional resources to support their learning needs.
2. The school is an active member in regular interagency meetings where information is shared and strategies to promote services are developed.
3. Government and non-government agencies are located on or near school grounds.
4. School and parent leaders work with community and business representatives to develop programs that support student learning.

Options include:

- Establishing a community hub within the school to build the capacity of families and community members to support the learning and social development of students.
- Developing partnerships with cultural groups, government and non-government agencies to support activities e.g. play group and breakfast clubs.
- Developing partnerships with universities to provide therapy services or develop community programs e.g. student speech and social work/community development.
- Gathering and providing information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.
- Establishing partnerships with local businesses to provide work experience and structured work placements for students.
- Providing information and access for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support and other programs or services.
- Developing an asset register of all support services outside the school to support students, families and community members.
- Informing families of community programs to support their children e.g. tutoring, mentoring and business partnerships.
- Encouraging community use of school facilities e.g. community rooms, library, halls and gyms.
- Providing information about vocational education programs and pathways to students and families.
- The school, students and families developing an outreach community service program e.g. *Service Learning*.

Resources to support schools

- [Connecting Agencies: Meeting priorities together](#)
- [Strengthening family and community engagement in student learning resource](#) in particular, section 4 – strategies, case studies and resources and the *Resources for school communities* attachment
- [Family-School Partnerships Framework - A guide for schools and families](#) (2008)
- [What Works – The Work program](#) Sections include Conversations, Relationships and Partnerships (2008)
- [Working with Aboriginal Communities](#) – A guide to community consultation and protocols
- [Who's Going to Teach My Child? A guide for parents of children with special learning needs](#) (2008)

7. Participating

Standard: Families and community members contribute to the life of the school in ways that reflect their interests, skills, experience and capacity to do so.

Drivers

- Provide opportunities for all families and community members to participate in the life of the school.
- Support families and community members to engage in student learning activities.
- Train parents and community members as classroom helpers and to work one on one with students during reading lessons.
- Build the capacity of family and community members to lead the learning of others.

Assessment criteria

1. The school participation program has reached out to all families and community members and offered opportunities for volunteering or paid employment.
2. The school has developed a database of family and community skills and expertise to support student learning activities.
3. The school has invited families and community members to participate in school-wide training programs to support teaching and learning programs.
4. School and parent leaders have worked with parents and community members on a regular basis to develop ways to improve parents' capacity to support student learning.

Options include:

- Training of family and community volunteers and local staff to facilitate programs to support students.
- Supporting families and community members to assist in classrooms and school activities e.g. excursions.
- Building a directory of family skills and interest and providing opportunities for families to lead school activities.
- Holding activities where the whole family, including siblings and grandparents can participate.
- School partners with training providers to deliver accredited courses for families and community members.
- Developing a policy for recruitment, training, goal setting and recognition for volunteers.
- Inviting family and community members to become involved as guest teachers, guest speakers about their jobs/career opportunities, excursion chaperones, tutors/mentors, sport coaches and canteen helpers.
- Providing surveys asking family members how they would like to participate at their child's school eg establish a skills bank.
- Providing flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies and school events, so that all are able to participate.
- Ensuring parental involvement in children's learning is a recognised topic of staff meetings, professional learning and in the induction of new staff members.

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