

# Fact Sheet: Parent engagement in learning

## Family-School Partnerships Framework

### A guide for schools and families



#### Improving student learning through parent engagement

Parent engagement in learning is known to lead to improved outcomes for students of all ages. Parents play an essential role as the first educators of children, and ongoing, active engagement of parents, families and communities has a major impact on a child's success at school.

Teachers and schools can support parent engagement in learning by building partnerships to connect learning at home and school.

#### Parent engagement and involvement

The *Family-School Partnerships Framework* focuses on parent engagement in learning, rather than parent involvement in schools.

*Parent involvement* in schools includes attending events, volunteering in class or other activities, and serving on school councils and parent committees.

*Parent engagement* in learning encompasses parent involvement in schooling as well as a broader range of activities, including parent support for children's learning at home, at school and in community contexts—recognising the cultural and social diversity of families and communities.

*Parental engagement in learning underpins children and young people's cognitive and social and emotional development, shapes family practices and behaviours, and can impact the nature of the school community and the experience of schooling. Parental engagement is therefore a highly significant leverage point for enhancing the academic attainment and wellbeing of children and young people (Emerson, Fear, Fox & Sanders, 2012, p. 34).*

In schooling contexts, parent engagement is described as:

*An intentional and collaborative strategy to support and leverage the knowledge, capacities and social capital of families to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for all children and young people. (Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau, 2014).*

The ACT Government defines parent engagement in two parts—family-led learning and family-school partnerships:

- *Family-led learning focused on high aspirations for children, shared reading, a positive environment for homework, parent-child conversation, a cognitively stimulating home environment and support for social and emotional wellbeing; and*
- *family-school partnerships that encourage positive parent-teacher relationships, communication about children’s progress, and engagement in the school community, while equipping parents to effectively support and encourage their children’s learning and wellbeing (ACT Government, 2014).*

Home-school and family-school partnerships feature strongly in definitions and understanding of parent engagement. Such partnerships are recognised as an effective strategy for supporting active parent engagement in different ways.

### **Why is parent engagement in learning important?**

There is strong evidence that parent engagement is associated with improvements in academic attainment for students of all ages. This includes early literacy, school adjustment and student attendance, motivation, self-regulatory behaviour, social skills, retention and graduation rates. This evidence confirms the importance of valuing and supporting parent engagement in learning.

*The evidence suggests that parental engagement strategies have the greatest impact when they are focused on linking behaviours of families, teachers and students to learning outcomes, when there is a clear understanding of the roles of parents and teachers in learning, when family behaviours are conducive to learning, and when there are consistent, positive relations between the school and parents (Emerson, Fear, Fox & Sanders, 2012, p. 32).*

When schools implement parent engagement as an intentional and collaborative strategy, they can draw on and benefit from the world views, knowledge, capacities and diversity of families. In turn, this enables families to gain vital information and support to help their children succeed.

School effectiveness research has identified positive home-school relations as a characteristic of schools with high academic standards, regardless of student background variables. Highly effective schools regard parents as partners in education and promote home-school partnerships.

*One characteristic of highly effective schools is that they form partnerships to enhance student learning and wellbeing. This includes partnering with parents and families (Masters, 2015).*

Research has also highlighted the importance of understanding which aspects of engagement are most beneficial. It has shown that good parenting, including providing a safe, secure and intellectually stimulating home environment, and modelling educational values and aspirations, has ‘a significant and positive effect on achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation’ (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003, p. 4).

Home-based parent engagement has been shown to have a greater effect on academic attainment than school-based parent involvement in activities. However, school-based parent involvement is still very important, and helps create good relationships between schools and families, facilitating positive teacher-child interactions.

Developed by the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau. The Bureau is a partnership between the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council, with support from the Australian Government. Visit the [Department of Education and Training website](#) for more information.