

Fact Sheet: Learning at home

Family-School Partnerships Framework

A guide for schools and families



Supporting and encouraging learning at home

Parent engagement in learning and everyday positive parenting are major contributors to children's learning, and can build children's confidence, motivation, capability and competence as learners.

Schools and teachers can support family-based learning by communicating effectively, building trust and sharing information and resources that families can use in the home.

Alongside families, many other relationships and factors also influence children through adolescence to adulthood. In this way, school education is a shared responsibility, and partnerships between families, schools and communities are important.

Family engagement is a shared responsibility of families and schools, and communities for student learning and achievement; it is continuous from birth to young adulthood; and it occurs across multiple settings where children learn (Weiss, Lopez & Rosenberg, 2010, p. 3).

Different parents may have different levels of confidence in their role as first educators, and their ability to partner with schools and teachers.

By building relationships and partnerships, schools can encourage and inspire parents to confidently engage in their children's education and to feel included, valued and influential in school life.

The beliefs and attitudes of school communities about the role of parents, and their engagement strategies, have a significant influence on parent engagement. The attitudes, relationships and communication from teachers, and the ways in which schools show their support for students and families, influence parent engagement both in the home and at school.

As teachers we can merge what we know about children, teaching and learning with what parents know, working in relationship to enhance our curriculum for children, to attend to the family's agenda as well as our own, and to ensure everyone is strengthened in the process (Pushor, 2013, p. 10).

Research and good practice points to some specific things parents, families, schools and teachers can focus on to support and facilitate home-based learning. The ideas below are a starting point.

For teachers and schools

- Create and take advantage of opportunities to better understand the experiences, capabilities, needs and expectations of parents and families.
- Understand family aspirations for their children, and build trust with families to share responsibility for education.
- Clearly communicate what is expected of parents and listen to families' expectations of schools.
- Communicate how parents and families can support and collaborate in learning.
- Enable time for parent and family interaction at school that helps build relationships.
- Engage with parents and families to explore their role in learning, and how they support learning at home.
- Provide resources and opportunities to support and facilitate home-based learning.
- Develop an understanding of contemporary learning in home and school contexts.
- Recognise and use learning opportunities in home environments.
- Proactively communicate and discuss children's contributions, progress and performance with parents.
- Integrate family engagement into curriculum planning.
- Reduce sources of conflict in school-home relationships and create safe places for teachers and parents to share information and solve problems together.
- Encourage and expect teachers to consider parent concerns as valuable feedback and make meaningful interventions or changes where possible and necessary.
- Provide development and training opportunities that bring teachers and families together and develop partnership capacity.

For parents and families

- Build supportive relationships with children and work hard to maintain these when circumstances are difficult.
- Communicate the value of education and the importance of schooling.
- Encourage educational aspirations and career goals; make plans with children for their future.
- Regularly ask children what they are learning and doing at school, and praise real effort and achievements.
- Take an interest in homework, provide help where needed and offer encouragement and support for children to solve problems for themselves.
- Have high expectations for children's academic success and their behaviour.
- Encourage physical activity and set reasonable boundaries for television, electronic games and online socialising.
- Engage children in meaningful conversations about everyday life and topical issues, and encourage critical thinking and the development of ideas.
- Have positive interactions with teachers; share knowledge, ideas and concerns.
- Participate in class-based, year level or co-curricular activities to show support for children's learning at school and build relationships with teachers and other parents.