**The Benefits of Effective Parent and Family Engagement**

**Information for Parents, Carers and Families**

**Parent Involvement in Schooling**

For many years, researchers looked at how the participation of parents in school activities influenced their children’s academic achievement. They talked about *parent(al) involvement* and looked at parent activities like attending school events, helping in class and serving on school boards and committees.

Then some started to study how parents influence their children’s academic achievement ‘outside the school gate’.

And guess what? They discovered that certain things parents and families say and do to support their children’s learning in the home environment makes a bigger difference.

This discovery is not an excuse to stop going to school events or helping with school activities.

Children of all ages benefit from seeing their parents and other family members involved in school life. And when we volunteer some of our time, knowledge and skills everyone benefits.

**Parent and Family Engagement in Learning**

We talk about p*arent and family engagement* because it is an ‘umbrella’ term. It covers:

* all the school-based activities that parents and families participate in and, importantly,
* the ways in which parents and families support their children’s learning at home, in school and in the community.

And we talk about ‘effective’ or ‘positive’ engagement because, while parents and families try to do many things to support their children’s learning, research has shown that some things are more useful than others.

Effective parent and family engagement benefits children, parents and families, and schools.

**Benefits for Students**

* Adapt more easily to school
* Are more engaged in schoolwork, and have more confidence about being a ‘competent’ learner
* Have stronger beliefs about the importance of education
* Attend school more regularly
* Obtain higher grades and test scores, and higher success in completing subjects
* Are likely to choose harder subjects and higher-level courses
* Have higher success in completing subjects
* Improved social and emotional skills
* Increased social capital (good connections to other people, the community and helpful resources/services)
* Lower drop-out rates; higher school graduation rates

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**Benefits for Parents and Families**

* Better understanding of your child’s learning and development needs
* Feel more confident about the school
* Feel better connected to the school
* Good communication with your child’s teacher(s); a stronger sense that you are working in partnership for your child’s benefit.
* Better understanding of what your child is learning and how they are progressing
* Increased confidence in your ability to support your children’s learning and help them to do as well as they can (even when they are doing topics and subjects that you know nothing about)
* Self and family esteem
* Self-education; you learn new things and new ways of doing things
* Increased social capital (good connections to other people, the community and helpful resources/services).

**Benefits for Schools**

Increased:

* Respect from staff for family strengths and efforts
* Readiness of staff to involve families in all aspects of school life
* Family satisfaction with the school, and school reputation in the community
* Understanding of students’ strengths, needs and of family goals
* Resources to support teaching and learning
* Participation of families in events and activities
* Expectation that families and the community will be involved in school programs and governance
* Social capital (good relationships with and between school leaders, teachers, students, families; good connections to other stakeholders, the community and useful resources/services).

**So, What Actions and Attitudes Facilitate Effective Engagement?**

Actions and attitudes by parents and families include:

* Being involved in the school
* Providing a supporting and stimulating home environment for learning
* Having high (but not unrealistic) expectations that children will achieve academically and in other ways
* Communicating about the value and enjoyment of learning
* Using a positive parenting style (supportive; encouraging conversation; setting rules and explaining decisions)
* Discussing different learning strategies (ways to learn, find out things, solve problems)
* Linking schoolwork to current events and other topics
* Recognising that the best ways to engage will change across the school years but that engagement is always important.

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Actions that schools and teachers can implement to promote parent and family engagement:

* Develop understanding of what parent and family engagement is and how to build a culture of engagement within the school
* Put in place parent/family engagement policies and plans
* Provide engagement capacity building training for teachers, non-teaching staff and parents
* Invest in trust building with individual families to build respectful relationships
* Focus on developing a strong sense of shared responsibility for children’s learning, and authentic partnerships
* Reach out to parents where they live and work, rather than expecting them to come to the school and be involved
* Recognise that parents you have judged to be un-engaged or disengaged (in the school and their children’s learning at school) may well be contributing in important ways at home.

**Other Information**

See:

Supporting Student Learning at Home – Parents and Teachers (Federation Information Sheet).

Please Just Say You’re Proud of Me – Perspectives of Young People on Parent Engagement and Doing Well at School (ARACY, 2019)

References: Much of this information comes from *Parental Engagement in Learning and Schooling: Lessons from Research* (Emerson, Fear, Fox & Saunders, 2012), a report completed by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) for the Family-School Partnerships Bureau. A joint initiative of the Australian Parents Council (APC) and the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO), the Bureau was funded by the Australian Government from operated from 2008 – 2017. Additional information came from two other Bureau resources, *Parent Engagement in Children’s Education* (Jennings & Bosch, 2011) and Australia’s Family-School Partnerships Framework which was revised in 2017 and published as an online resource primarily for school leaders and teachers, and from *Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement: Do Parents Know They Matter?* (Harris & Goodall, 2007).

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