

# Parent Engagement framework

Building strong parent-school partnerships to support learning outcomes for children and young people



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education





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# Introduction

Children and young people learn every day, in every environment they are in. Parents are their children's first educators, and how parents support their children's learning matters. Schools provide the professional expertise and formal structure of education, and parents shape their children's values, attitudes and approaches to learning. Together, schools and parents provide the opportunities for children to thrive.

Parent engagement in learning starts from early childhood and continues as children move through school and beyond. Engaging with parents is, and has always been, at the heart of working with children and supporting them to learn. Parent engagement in learning is embedded in the standards that guide professional teaching practice, and is a core aspect of teaching expertise.

Authentic parent engagement may not always be easy. For our education system to be world class, we must support leaders, teachers and parents to partner in purposeful and effective ways.

We know from the research that significant benefits are possible through strong parent-school partnerships. Schools with effective parent engagement are more likely to increase academic achievements and student wellbeing, and improve lifelong outcomes for children.

When we engage with parents in their child's learning; we actively:

- reaffirm children's rights to education, safety and wellbeing under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- support the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians and the commitment to strengthen relationships with parents.

## Purpose of the framework

The Parent Engagement framework is our commitment to working in partnership with parents. It is the foundation for how we can develop quality parent engagement strategies.

Our commitment applies to the whole education system and includes school-based, corporate and support staff. It gives us a shared understanding of what effective parent engagement practices look like. Through this understanding, we can build on our existing work and develop strategies that will allow us to achieve our vision.

## What we mean when we say parent

We recognise the diversity of families, and the range of care arrangements that may exist for children. When we say "parent", we are referring to biological parents, legal guardians, or people who are primary caregivers for children. This includes relative carers, kinship carers, foster carers, residential carers and others.

## Vision

Parents are engaged in their child's education and feel empowered to support learning at home through strong partnerships with schools.

Our relationships with parents are at the centre of success for every child at school.

## Benefits

Effective parent engagement practices have many benefits, including:

- increased student attendance and student engagement in learning
- expanding ways for children to be successful learners, at school, at home and in the world around them.
- enhancing the knowledge, professional skills and capacity of educators
- a richer, more diverse and inclusive school community.

## We all have a role to play

Role or group	Responsibilities
<b>Department for Education</b>	Ensure parent engagement is recognised as a fundamental part of organisational performance and service excellence. Include parent engagement elements in policy, procedures, guidelines, standards and practices.
<b>Local education teams</b>	Provide evidence-based partnership planning to improve parent engagement.
<b>Leaders</b>	Lead whole-of-school approaches to quality parent engagement. Ensure parent involvement is a core part of governance and decision-making processes.
<b>Educators</b>	Create and maintain authentic and respectful relationships with parents about their child's learning and wellbeing. Share ideas with parents about how they can support their child's learning at home.
<b>Parents</b>	Work with educators to help their child succeed at school. Find ways to bring school learning into the home. Encourage and support their child's learning.
<b>Children and young people</b>	Talk with their parents about what they're learning at school. Explore how their learning connects to their family, community and life.



# Elements of the framework

The parent engagement elements are drawn from the Key Dimensions of the national Family-School Partnerships Framework. This ensures that our work is aligned with national approaches to parent engagement. The elements guide our shared goals and shape how we develop and sustain effective partnerships with parents.



## Connect

**Connecting learning at home and at school** – value and strengthen the connection between children learning at home and school.



## Communicate

**Communicating as partners** – welcome, inform and involve parents through clear and respectful communication.



## Include

**Building identity and belonging** – ensure parents and children feel their culture and identity is visible and respected.



## Recognise

**Acknowledging the role of the family** – recognise the important role parents have in their child's education both at school and at home.



## Consult

**Consulting on decision-making** – include parents in decision-making to create shared responsibility and accountability.



## Collaborate

**Collaborating beyond the school** – work with the wider community to expand student learning and wellbeing opportunities.



## Encourage

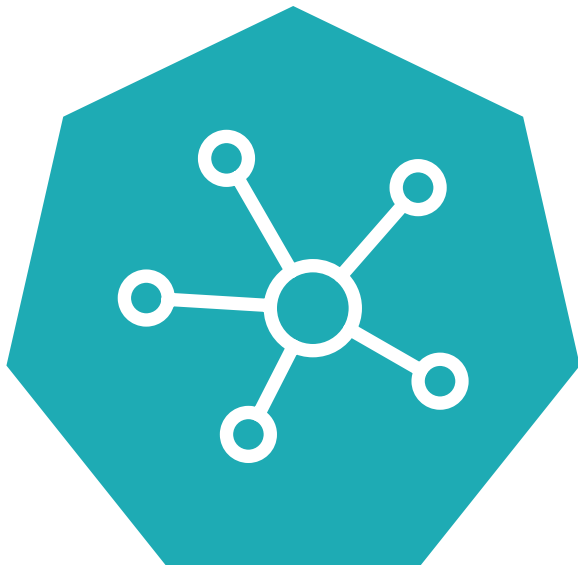
Encouraging parents and community to participate in a variety of ways.



The focus is on success  
for every student

# Connect

Value and strengthen the connection between children learning at home and school.



## Effective practices

- Recognise and value what parents know about their child. Use this knowledge to connect learning at school and home.
- Create shared high expectations for children at school and beyond.
- Identify learning opportunities outside the school and work with parents to connect these with what happens at school.
- Share with parents the topics and learning tasks that interest their child at school.
- Recognise the skills and knowledge that children bring from home to their learning at school.
- Work closely with parents during student transitions to make changes as smooth as possible, especially at key developmental stages.

# Communicate

Welcome, involve and inform parents through clear and respectful communication.



## Effective practices

- Offer a range of ways for parents to communicate with us, both formally and informally, and at different levels within the school and parts of the department. Offer realistic and flexible options. Be responsive to what parents say is needed.
- Communicate in a way that is respectful, culturally appropriate and non-judgmental.
- Provide information in simple, clear language that is easy for parents to understand.
- Provide opportunities for parents and staff to share ideas about how they can support their child's learning, acknowledging that these strategies change as children grow older.
- Approach communication as a way for schools, departmental services and parents to learn about each other, as well as exchanging information.
- Report student achievements respectfully and meaningfully so that parents know about and understand their child's progress.

# Include

Ensure parents and children feel their culture and identity is visible and respected.



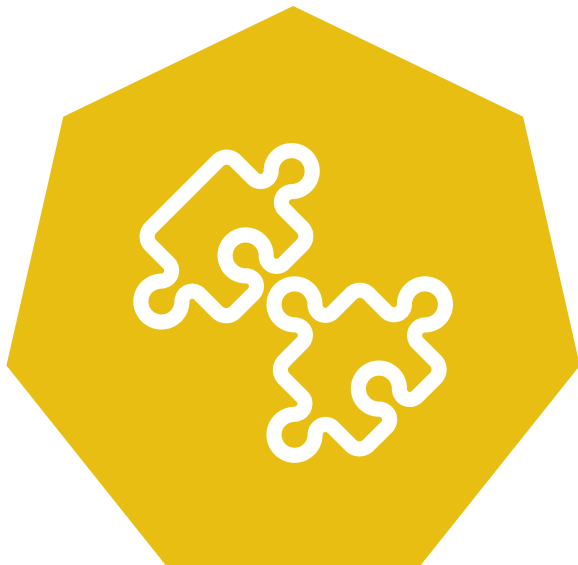
## Effective practices

- Create positive first impressions and maintain these through warm and friendly relationships with parents.
- Create spaces that make families and communities feel welcomed, included and respected.
- Learn from parents about their diverse cultures and identities, and incorporate this knowledge in learning programs and teaching practices.
- Invite families and communities to celebrate cultures and traditions with the school and the department throughout the year.
- Be creative and persistent in reaching all parents in the school community, especially those who are more isolated.
- Provide resources and curriculum that increase the visibility of cultures and identities not yet present in your school.



# Recognise

Recognise the important role parents have in their child's education both at school and at home.



## Effective practices

- Work to understand children's backgrounds and family stories. Use this knowledge to inform curriculum and learning plans.
- Talk to parents about how their children learn at home. Find out what is working well for their child and what might not be.
- Make it easier for parents to understand the school's goals, curriculum and social expectations so they can reinforce this at home.
- Regularly talk about the roles of teachers and parents in each child's learning.
- Show sensitivity to parent values and attitudes, and recognise how these may affect the level of parent engagement in different learning activities.
- Provide opportunities for parents to be seen by their children working closely with teachers and other school staff.

# Consult

Include parents in decision-making to create shared responsibility and accountability.



## Effective practices

- Ensure families from different social and cultural backgrounds are included in decision-making.
- Include parents in school planning, evaluation and policy development.
- Create governing councils that are representative of the school community and allow for diverse opinions, values and interests.
- Be considerate of the needs of Aboriginal parents, parents who live remotely, and parents who may experience barriers to engagement due to culture, language, disability, homelessness, and other factors.
- Offer a range of ways for parents to provide their feedback at a local school and departmental level. Be creative about how you consult.
- Develop the department's policies, programs, procedures, guidelines and standards in consultation with parent and community representative bodies.

# Collaborate

Work with the wider community to expand student learning and wellbeing opportunities.



## Effective practices

- Get to know parents and find out about their roles and interests in the community. Offer them meaningful opportunities to contribute to the school based on these interests.
- Build on parent relationships and connections to look for ways the school can contribute to the local community.
- Partner with external organisations to create shared community learning environments for educators, students and parents.
- Work with parents to connect children to ongoing learning opportunities in the community.
- Connect parents and students with community resources.
- Create a welcoming and inclusive community hub at the school.

# Encourage

Encourage parents to participate in a wide variety of ways.



## Effective practices

- Invite parents to be involved in school and departmental events, activities and programs.
- Provide joint information sessions for parents and staff. Take time to learn together.
- Provide information to build on the skills, abilities and expertise of parents so they can lead the learning of others.
- Share ideas about the different roles that parents can play in the school environment. Ask parents what interests them and what they would be comfortable doing.
- Invite former students and their families to contribute to school programs and activities for current students and their families.
- Encourage parents to be involved in extra-curricular activities that support their child's interests.





