

Wudinna RSL Memorial
Kindergarten

INNOVATIVE GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS AND PRESCHOOLS

A targeted approach to parent engagement – a case study

Leader

Beck Sampson, Director



“Honestly, getting dads involved can be difficult
– this is partly because of their occupations”

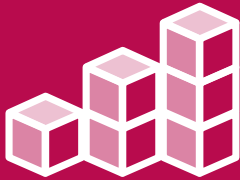
Beck Sampson

The setting

Getting dads involved

In preschools in remote country areas it's difficult to communicate with families because many live on farms and children come to preschool on the bus. When communication is difficult, meaningful engagement can be a real challenge.

For Wudinna RSL Memorial Kindergarten, the challenge was to engage with the dads of the preschool children and get them involved in governance discussions.



In addressing this challenge, preschool director Beck Sampson looked for ways to improve the communication with her preschool's families

The steps

Better ways to communicate

Beck developed a strategy to communicate, using a range of tools, to reach as many families as possible.

Some of the approaches were broad and aimed at the whole preschool community, but others were specifically to improve communication and engagement with dads. Some of these strategies were to:

- **set up and maintain a Facebook page for the preschool – targeting content for dads**
- **develop and run a Facebook auction to raise funds for the preschool – this event is in its sixth year and raises between \$4,000 and \$6,000 annually**
- **establish the annual Father's Day breakfast that is always well attended by dads**
- **host the much-loved preschool concert – even though the event is held in the middle of harvest time, all the dads make time to come along and support the children**
- **create skill-sharing forums – parents are invited to the preschool and share their special skills on a roster basis**
- **deliver programs aimed at bringing parents together to discuss positive parenting.**

Talking about the role of dads

A particular approach that has been very successful is holding 'couples' workshops/training. These sessions have been able to engage dads and get them talking about parenting. They help families reflect on their parenting and build their abilities as parents through skill development and education.

Parenting workshops and training have traditionally only been attended by mums. This is starting to change. Encouraging dads to get involved has been a strong motivator for Beck as there are strong community perceptions about the role of the dad, and Beck is keen to explore this in a positive and supportive forum.

To help with this program, the preschool was awarded a grant through the Inger Rice Grant program. The funding meant the preschool could have meals and child care which encouraged more couples to the events. Over the past 2 years, Beck has had 16 dads take part in the program.



“It's a great way to recognise that dads are a crucial part of the preschool community.”

Beck Sampson

How it helped

The successes have come from lots of different programs and ideas, resulting in more dads coming into the preschool and being involved with preschool activities.