

Learning for effective teaching

1.4 Engage with the community



Essence >

Leaders and teachers interact with communities to build learning partnerships and connect student learning beyond the school.

1.4 Engage with the community

In my role as a leader of learning (instructional leader) this means I will:

- **Create conditions to involve parents/caregivers as partners in the educational process for their children**
 - > Remember that parents are the child's first educators
 - > Develop authentic, inclusive and respectful relationships with the community
 - > Appreciate the differing levels of parental and community engagement appropriate for the family contexts
 - > Harness the expertise of the community in the school's learning program
- **Actively elicit and respond to parents'/caregivers' aspirations for their children's education**
 - > Create focus groups where parents/caregivers and staff share their views
 - > Work with the School Governing Council to promote its role in developing and communicating the learning vision for the school
- **Ensure opportunities for the community to develop understandings about learning, the emerging future and the implications for their children**
 - > Develop credibility as an educational leader with the community
 - > Facilitate staff and parent/caregiver opportunities for shared learning
 - > Regularly expose parents/caregivers to relevant educational research, ideas and information
 - > Show connections between current educational thinking and the school's program

I will strategically design to:

- **Clarify that partnership means mutual responsibility**
 - > Demonstrate that decisions and judgments are based on professional knowledge together with parental perspectives
- **Establish expectations that teachers will engage positively with parents/caregivers and students as partners in the educational process**
 - > Develop protocols for engagement and prompt follow-up
 - > Explicitly encourage valuing of the diverse strengths and interests of the community that contribute to student learning
 - > Actively challenge non-inclusive attitudes and actions
- **Establish systems and processes for teachers and families to work together to maximise student learning**
 - > Establish effective open communication between school and home about student learning
 - > Establish opportunities for teachers to learn in partnership with parents/caregivers
 - > Establish school reporting processes that include parents/caregivers in shared celebrations of student learning
 - > Encourage teachers to give specific strategies for parents/caregivers to assist learning at home

1.4

Alert

Some parents' own experience of schooling left them feeling vulnerable and alienated. Approaches and strategies to break down these barriers are crucial. Establishing an appropriate interplay between parental perspectives and professional judgment can be challenging, requiring sensitivity and delicate balancing.

Practice check

- Do I actively challenge deficit views and assumptions about the community aired by staff?
- How consciously do we consider parents' own experiences of schooling when communicating with them?
- What systems exist for staff and parents/caregivers to work together for student learning?
- Are parents/caregivers invited to engage in conversations about learning, to listen to guest speakers about learning, and to talk about the future?

If teachers engage with the community, they will ...

- listen to and get to know the community, and actively seek out community strengths
- use these strengths to complement and enrich the class learning program
- develop richer understanding of their learners by seeking dialogue and feedback from parents/caregivers
- blur the boundaries between home and school to create more natural learning contexts—the wall-less classroom
- use contemporary ICTs to engage with global and online communities and to expand and enhance learning
- communicate regularly with the community through multiple forums

Notes:

Leaders of learning— Food for thought

The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his/her education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his/her parents.

United Nations

If educators view children simply as students they are likely to see the family as separate from school ... If educators view children as children, they are likely to see both the family and community as partners with the school in children's education and development.

Joyce Epstein

Involving parents in (and not just informing them about) common learning standards or outcomes, creates opportunities to develop a deeper dialogue between parents and teachers about teaching and learning ...

Andy Hargreaves & Shawn Moore

For me as a parent, a teacher, a school principal, and one who remembers what it is like to be an Aboriginal student, I understand very well that just getting a child inside the school gate does not mean the problem is solved. My experience as an educator confirms that children and parents engage in school positively when respectful partnerships exist.

Chris Sarra

Our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and most of all connected to the adults and other children around them. We wanted to build on parents' competencies, not their deficiencies, and recognise the crucial role they play in educating their children.

Margaret Whalley

A working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and the willingness to negotiate. This implies a sharing of information, responsibility, skills, decision making and accountability.

Patrick Easen, Pippa Kendall & Janet Shaw

We often overestimate children's academic ability and underestimate their intellectual capacity.

Lillian Katz

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