

Family Engagement Policy

Date: 20th October 2009

1. Rationale

- 1.1 To improve the educational outcomes for all students at Williamstown North Primary School by increasing the level of family involvement in their child/ren's learning.

Background

- 1.2 Research indicates that the educational outcomes of children are significantly advantaged by the engagement of families in their child's education. Family engagement has been shown to reduce absenteeism, increase retention, increase engagement in school and school work, improve transition, increase homework completion and contribute to higher educational aspirations. Family engagement has been found to have a positive impact on children's self esteem, their social competence, their academic outcomes and their participation in post compulsory education.

2. Aims

- 2.1 To provide a wide variety of ways for the school to reach out to parents, community members and students to enhance the educational outcomes for all students.
- 2.2 To foster a school environment which consciously, and conscientiously taps into parent energy to improve student achievement.
- 2.3 To work closely together as a community to ensure that every child succeeds.
- 2.4 To value the diversity of families and use this as a resource for building partnerships and a strong community.

3. Implementation

- 3.1 The school will develop a Family Engagement Strategy in conjunction with the school's Strategic Plan.
- 3.2 An annual Family Engagement Plan will be devised in conjunction with the school's Annual Implementation Plan
- 3.3 The Family Engagement Strategy and Plan will be managed and monitored by the Education Committee of School Council.
- 3.4 A Family Engagement budget will be devised annually as a part of the school's Program Budget process. Resources will be developed and/or purchased, to support the school's Family Engagement strategy.
- 3.5 The school will survey families annually in response to the initiatives in the Family Engagement strategy.
- 3.6 The school will actively formulate strategies in relation to the following Seven Key Dimensions of an Effective Family/School Partnership: -

1. Communicating.
 2. Connecting learning at home and at school.
 3. Building Community and identity.
 4. Recognising the role of the family.
 5. Consultative decision- making.
 6. Collaborating beyond the school.
 7. Participating or volunteering.
- 3.7** Our school will actively encourage and value parental involvement.
- 3.8** The school values the 'School Services Program', which was formally operated by Parent & Friends Association, and is now a component of Community Liaison Committee. The Community Liaison Committee will oversee the program and report on the program to School Council.
- 3.9** Parent and Family Engagement will be supported at school via 'Family Networking'. This initiative will also be overseen by the Community Liaison Committee and will involve the organisation of networking and socialising opportunities within the school community.
- 3.10** Parents of non-English speaking backgrounds will be actively encouraged to be involved with the school.
- 3.11** The Newsletter and school web page will be used as key modes of communicating family engagement information, activities and initiatives.
- 3.12** Professional Learning programs for parents aimed at enhancing student learning will be offered by the school.
- 3.13 The responsibilities of the Principal: -**
The School Principal will: -
- 3.13.1** Consider family-school partnerships in the development and implementation of the school's Strategic Plan.
 - 3.13.2** Support development of Policies and Programs to ensure all staff and families have information and opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in order to participate effectively.
 - 3.13.3** Ensure that decision making structures provide genuine opportunities for families to participate.
 - 3.13.4** Provide appropriate support or families who participate on school committees.
 - 3.13.5** Provide training and development opportunities for teachers to foster family-school partnerships.
- 3.14 The responsibilities of teachers: -**
Teachers will: -
- 3.14.1** Structure home-learning experiences to enable families to develop the skills and knowledge to assist their children with their learning at home.
 - 3.14.2** Consider the needs of families when deciding on school related matters.
 - 3.14.3** Encourage the involvement of parent advocates, if appropriate, for parents who may be experiencing difficulties communicating with the school.
 - 3.14.4** Provide opportunities for all parents to take an active part in their child's learning, and to gain an understanding and acceptance of the rationale supporting family participation.

3.15 The participation of parents: -

Parents will be: -

- 3.15.1** Encouraged to seek opportunities to be involved in their child/ren's learning.
- 3.15.2** Encouraged to talk with their children's teachers about how they can best support their child/ren's learning.
- 3.15.3** Encouraged to have regular conversations with their child/ren, thereby showing a positive regard for education.
- 3.15.4** Encouraged to monitor their child/ren's learning at home and ensure their child/ren get a balance between study and other activities.
- 3.15.5** Encouraged to participate in the life of the school, where possible, and in any way that they feel comfortable to do so.
- 3.15.6** Encouraged to stay informed about what is happening in the classroom, the school, and the school community.

3.16 The Role of School Council: -

School Council will: -

- 3.16.1** Monitor the level of partnerships occurring within the school.
- 3.16.2** Ensure that family participation is linked to improving child/ren's learning outcomes.
- 3.16.3** Actively seek input from minority community groups, where cultural or language difficulties might otherwise inhibit their participation.
- 3.16.4** Ensure the Family Engagement Policy is reflected by strategies described in the School Strategic Plan.
- 3.16.5** Ensure the Strategic Plan strategies are translated into actions that are reflected in the school's Annual Implementation Plan.

4. Evaluation/Review

- 4.1** This Policy will be reviewed in line with the school's Policy review process.
- 4.2** An updated 'Strategy' will be devised annually, based on the review and the 'progress' of the previous year.

This policy was updated on 24th November 2009

Appendices:

Number 1:

Family- School Partnerships Framework (A guide for schools and families)

An Australian Government/Department of Education,
Employment and Workplace Relations publication.

See: Pages 5-8 Key Dimensions of Family Engagement and Definitions.

See below abbreviated extracts of each of the Key Dimensions of Family Engagement as described in Family-School Partnerships Framework.

Communicating:

Effective communication is active, personal, frequent and culturally appropriate. Schools go out of their way to make families feel welcome and valued. Ongoing exchange of information.

Connection Learning at home and at school:

Understanding by families and schools of the overlap between the home and school environments. Ensuring that families are informed about and understand their child's progress.

Building Community and Identity:

Activities that improve the quality of life in a community while honouring the culture, traditions, values and relationships in that community.

Recognising the role of the family:

As primary educators of their children, parents and families have a lasting influence on their children's attitudes and achievements at school.

Consultative Decision making:

Ensure that parents' values and interests are heard and respected. The school is accountable to its community. Seeking family opinions outside the formal structures of school.

Collaborating beyond the School:

Identifying, locating and integrating community resources. These resources can strengthen and support the school, students and families.

Participating:

Families' time, energy and expertise can support learning and school programs in many ways.