



PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING AND WELLBEING

When families and schools work together, children and young people are more likely to build good relationships and do better at school.

There are simple things parents can do at home, and with their child's/young person's school, to help them to do their best. Showing our children/young people that education is important, building their confidence and connecting with their school helps to shape their learning and well-being.

It is important that parents continue to do these things from the very early years and right through their schooling – they are just as important and successful in secondary school as in primary school.

The impact parents can have

Parents and families are children's/young people's first teachers and they continue to help them to learn and thrive throughout the school years. When their family's love and support is combined with the expert knowledge of teachers, it can have a significant and lasting impact:

- Children/young people are more likely to enjoy learning and be motivated to do well
- Children/young people can have better relationships with their peers, improved behaviour and greater confidence
- Children/young people can do better at school and are more likely to graduate and go on to college, TAFE or university
- Children/young people can be less likely to miss days at school

There are simple things parents can do that have a big impact

At home

Many things families do to help children/young people thrive – such as healthy eating, being active and showing affection – are very important. Parents have the biggest impact on children's/young people's learning when they help them to believe in themselves and to enjoy learning new things.

Some things to do to be ready for a great day of learning - Have your child/young person well fed to start the day: have a regular bedtime (just as important in secondary years to have rules or agreement about this): make sure they have all they need for school (writing materials, pencils, pens, sports gear etc – watch for school emails or notes): make sure they have lunch or a lunch order or cash: get them to school on time.



With your child's/young person's school: Teachers are experts in learning and can help you to help your child/young person to learn. The best starting point is to keep the lines of communication open between yourself and their teacher/s.

The evidence is clear. **Parents make a difference.** And the way they contribute most to their children's/young people's education is through what they do at home. Being a parent can be challenging, but the good news is that you don't have to be 'volunteer of the year' or an expert on the war of 1812 to help your young people succeed at school."

What are the most important things parents can do at home?

These might seem simple but research shows that all of these make a difference to your child's/young person's learning.

Talk with your child/young person

Just spending time talking with them helps them to learn and grow. Simple ways to do this include talking about their day and what happened. You can also remember and chat about the fun times your family has spent together or talk about big ideas – such as the things you and your family believe in, science and nature or important issues in the community. Keep communications open with your child/young person so they can discuss anything with you.

Support good relationships

Parents can help children/young people to develop friendships and get along with other people, including their teacher. They tend to do better when they get on with their teacher. Children/young people also tend to enjoy learning and being at school when they have strong friendships. Model for them by your good relationships and the way you talk to and about others.

Believe in your child's/young person's potential

Believing in your child/young person rubs off and has an influence on how well they do at school. Showing children/young people that you believe in them and their ability to do their best and go on to be successful is one of the most powerful things you can do.

Read together

Reading together helps children/young people to develop and practise their reading, writing and language skills. Research shows this is just as effective throughout all the years of schooling – not just early years and primary school. Telling stories and talking about things that they're interested in helps them enjoy learning. You can read in the language you speak at home. But this doesn't mean that you should be forcing them to sound out words. Instead of focussing on teaching your children/young people the mechanics of reading, teach them to love reading. Make reading fun and enjoyable!



COLLABORATING
for **SUCCESS**

Learn about the world together

Children/young people learn by exploring new things and finding new interests. This can include everyday activities like cooking or grocery shopping, or going to community events, museums, libraries, concerts, festivals and sporting events.

Have high expectations for your children/young people

Let your children/young people know that you think it is important that they do well in school. High, but realistic parental expectations have the greatest impact on student achievement. When parents consistently express belief in their children's/young people's potential and tell their kids that they expect them to succeed to the very best of their ability, students do better.

Talk about school

Talk with your children/young people about what's happening at school – activities, programs and what they are learning. Surprisingly, this has a greater impact on academic achievement than monitoring homework, being at home after school for your kids, or limiting the time they are allowed to watch TV or go out during the week – all important but use your time wisely.

Help your children develop a positive attitude toward learning and good work habits

The research shows that the greatest influence you can have on your kids' chances for success in school lie in how you influence their attitudes, their sense of personal competence, and their work habits, including persistence, seeking help, and planning. So rather than trying to directly "teach" your children/young people, focus on helping them handle distractions and crises of confidence, praise them for effort and persistence and demonstrate a positive attitude about school as a whole. Bit by bit, these are the attributes that will build solid foundations for ongoing success.

Create a good homework environment

The things you can do to get the most out of homework are building your child's/young person's confidence and supporting them to be able to learn on their own – the best ways to help them will change as they get older. Find them a quiet space to study and try to make homework a calm experience. If you are helping your child/young person, try and make sure it's a nice time for you to spend together. It's good to have rules about homework, but it's important to not create confusion by pushing children/young people to do more, or expecting them to do less, than the school asks. You can talk to your child's/young person's teacher/s if you have questions about homework.

With your child's/young person's school you can

Support two way communication



Good communication between parents and teachers makes sure everyone is on the same page. It also helps teachers know if there is anything outside school that may be affecting your child/young person. It's okay to ask for advice to help your child/young person or ask questions about what's happening at school. To work together, parents and teachers should respect each other's roles and experience. Simple ways to stay in touch include information from school (e.g. notes, newsletters and website updates), face-to-face meetings, email and phone contact during agreed contact hours. Use your Parent Knowledge to support your child.

Get involved in your school community

Showing children/young people that you believe education is important is one of the best things you can do. One way to do this is by connecting with your school community – getting to know your child's/young person's teacher and other families, attending events or volunteering at school, or taking part in school committees.

Whether it is attending a school concert, cheering on a school team, or participating in community events and meetings planned by your school council, parent involvement in school activities can foster a sense of community within the school. It can build stronger relationships between teachers and parents, and provide an opportunity for parents to connect with and support each other.

School-based activities may not have a direct impact on student achievement, but they can be a fun and engaging way to build a stronger school community. When you can, take advantage of the opportunity to participate in school events to show your support for your children's school.

Am I doing enough?

Many parents feel that they should be doing more at school. For parents who are busy, it is important to remember that supporting your children's/young people's learning at home matters. Teaching your child/young person new things, reading together and supporting their interests makes a big difference. You don't need to be an expert – supporting and encouraging learning is enough.

Of course, every child/young person and situation is different so maintaining a flexible attitude is important. Children/young people need to develop independence and expectations that are too high can create stress. Like you, schools want your child/young person to be the best that they can be. But putting pressure on schools can reduce teachers' abilities to meet the needs of all students. Good communication with your child's/young person's school will help you to support them, and help the school to support your child/young person too.

If you notice something different about your child/young person or something about school is troubling them contact their teacher to discuss so that it doesn't become a bigger problem than it is.



Make sure you read the school newsletter – this is full of important information for you about the school.

For further information



www.pandf.org.au

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