

# Fact Sheet: Building partnerships

## Family-School Partnerships Framework A guide for schools and families



### Building family-school partnerships

Schools and teachers can support parent engagement by building and sustaining partnerships to connect learning at home and school.

However, moving towards a family-school partnership approach typically requires a significant change in school and family attitudes, and in school culture.

Schools vary considerably in the commitment, energy and skills they apply to family-school partnerships. Building partnerships requires a good understanding of the research and a desire to see cultural change.

A solid platform is needed at the whole-school level to support family-school partnerships, including:

1. **Committed leaders** who are familiar with research and good practice in engagement and partnerships, and who model relationship building and collaboration.
2. **An engagement or partnership policy** that clearly references the links between parent/family engagement and learning outcomes, and integrates the principles, dimensions and characteristics of effective partnerships.
3. **A capacity building strategy** to strengthen and build the knowledge, skills and confidence of families and school staff, and in the action team to lead and engage in partnership work.
4. **An engagement or partnership action team**, comprising school leaders, teachers, parents and community members, that consults and collaborates widely to agree on priorities, goals, strategies and measures.
5. **Effective school-community communication**, reporting and feedback processes, and direct links between the action team and the school board/council, school curriculum and school planning leaders, and parent groups/representatives.
6. **A support network** to tap into family and community knowledge and expertise, and to solve problems and share ideas.

7. **Adequate resourcing** to support the engagement or partnership policy, related plans and capacity building strategy.
8. **Good governance**, which includes a process for documenting actions, outcomes, learning and additional ideas for action.

Changing culture requires a series of actions, operations and procedures that are part of any initiative within the broader strategy. Such initiatives should be:

- linked to learning—align with school and system achievement goals, and connect families to the teaching and learning goals for the students
- developmental—focus on building the intellectual, social and human capital of stakeholders engaged in the program
- collaborative—conduct learning in group settings and focus on building networks and learning communities
- relational—build respectful and trusting relationships between home and school
- interactive—give participants opportunities to test out and apply new skills; skill mastery requires coaching and practice.

## Using research and evidence

A good understanding of the [research and evidence](#) about parent engagement informs sustainable partnership strategies that bring partners together to focus on achieving the desired outcomes.

Parent engagement in the home has a significant effect on children's learning. The evidence also shows that to effectively support children's learning in school partnership, strategies need to be intentional, flexible and well supported.

## Using the framework and resources

The *Family-School Partnerships Framework* provides information and resources to support schools to build and sustain effective partnerships with families and communities. This includes resources outlining the core principles, key dimensions and characteristics of effective partnerships, as well as practical tools to help create, evaluate and improve partnerships. These materials can help school communities reflect on their current culture and practices, and plan for further improvements.

Schools are well placed to lead partnership-building. However, this may also be initiated by parents, other family members and community organisations. Partnerships take many forms because student and family needs, local contexts and available resources vary. Good practice is useful to draw on, but defining and building a strategy that best fits local context will prove most successful.

To see how Australian schools have developed partnership strategies and put them into action, read the *Family-School Partnerships Framework* case studies, [Our Stories](#).

Developed by the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau. The Bureau is a partnership between the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council, with support from the Australian Government. Visit the [Department of Education and Training website](#) information.