

Tips for Principals

Parent involvement that makes a difference to a child's learning

Four key things that parents can do to support their child's learning are outlined here, plus some tips for principals, to support a consistent message.

1. Having High Expectations

The research shows undeniably, that high parental expectations have the greatest impact on student achievement. Studies looking at teacher's perception of the positive attitude parents have toward their child's education, teacher, and school, was significantly related to increased academic performance, measured by both a standardized achievement test and teacher ratings of the child's classroom academic performance. Further, parent involvement was significantly related to academic performance above and beyond the impact of the child's intelligence (IQ).

You can support your school, you can:

Talk to parents about the research supporting the links between high expectations at home and achievement in school, and circulate the parent engagement tip sheet for parents

Communicate with your school council about the efforts you and your staff are making, to promote a clear and consistent message about what makes a difference.



2. Talking about school at home

Studies have shown that parents talking to their kids about school and school activities at home, had a greater impact than learning than monitoring homework, being home after school or limiting screen time.

You can support your parent to talk with their children about school, by giving them something to talk about:

- Communicate with parents regularly using a variety of tools (newsletters, group text, online) to inform them of school initiatives, research and staff changes
- Encourage staff to come along to school council meetings and discuss strategies in action
- Keep your parent email address list up to date

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3. Helping students develop a positive attitude and good work habits

As students get older, the impact parents can have on their child's academic achievement decline. Parents can't teach their children everything they need to know (the same goes for schools), but the habits they encourage at an early age, have long-lasting benefits, through to high school.

To support parents in this, you can promote parents interacting with their children, rather than 'teaching' them.

- Assure parents that they don't have to 'teach' their children. That teachers focus on content, and they can assist by helping their child develop a sense of personal competence, encouraging persistence, showing them how to plan and manage their time, handle distractions, and ask for help when they need it.
- Provide helpful tips to both parents and school staff summarising the research on effective parent engagement.

4. Reading with children

Parents make a major difference by reading and talking about books and stories with their kids, in any language. Reading skills can be taught at school, and parents can help build a crucial foundation for successful literacy through conversation and reading together,

which develops the motivation to read, a greater level of comprehension, and strong oral language skills.

To encourage parents to read with their children, you can:

- Review library operating hours, and encourage families to visit both the school library, and public libraries in your area
- Support classroom book lending and swapping activities

School practices make a difference

Evidence clearly shows that school practices can make a difference, but it's less about programs and more about outreach, communication, collaboration and building relationships. By including parent engagement enablers in your school improvement plans such as clear, consistent and inclusive messaging, training and information sharing for staff and families, proactive and effective communication and relationship building strategies, you will help to create a welcoming culture that invites everyone to support student learning and school improvement.

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