Parent Leadership and Family Engagement Strategy
Catholic Education Sandhurst
A System Perspective
September 8 2014
Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge and pay respect to the elders both past and present of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin nation. I give thanks for their stewardship of this country and continue to commit to reconciliation and justice.
Context

• Motivation.
  • Personal story

• Context in Catholic education
  • Church document – Parents as Prime Educators

• Core relationships and authorities
  • School Boards in every school over past 25 years; critical relationships with external peers

• Learnings on the journey
  • Parent Leaders will describe
Parents as Prime Educators

“Our Schools Engaging Fully With Human Potential Inspired By The Catholic Story

Subsidiarity
Dialogue
Co-responsibility
Stewardship
Relationships
School Boards & School Staff
Families
Parish
CEO
Students

“Schools Without Borders” *
Guiding Principles:

Parent Leadership & Family Engagement

- Subsidiarity
- Co-Responsibility
- Stewardship
- Relationships
- Dialogue
Subsidiarity

- Exercising natural levels of authority
- One level doesn’t assume authority in another’s decision making
- Based on interdependence
- Is not autonomy
- Is tested in how we manage grievances
Co-Responsibility

- ‘it takes a village to raise a child’
Stewardship

• Core of the story/memories
• Prudent management of materials and resources
• Parents as Leaders as well as partners
• Family Engagement is an important aspect of the tradition
Relationships

• In the context of faith
• Trust
• Empathy
• Respect
• Collegiality and conviviality
• Regular communication
• Celebration
• Acknowledgement
• Appreciation and challenge

How are relationships built in your school community?
Dialogue

- Practising power ‘with’, not power ‘over’
- Caring as much about questions as answers
- Being comfortable with ambiguity and pardon
- Striving ‘to be’ as much as ‘to do’
- Caring as much about the learning of others as ourselves
- Leaving ourselves open to be changed by the conversation
Philosophy & Vision of Strategy

The Strategy gives expression to the Vision for Catholic Education Sandhurst

“Our Schools: Engaging fully with human potential by the Christian Story”

Background and Development

**Vision:** Sandhurst School Education Board - SSEB

**Resourcing:**

**External Consultants** - Sharon Butler, George Otero;

**Project Officers** – Development & Implementation
At the heart of CoSSI is the focus on relationships with

- Students
- Families
- Staff
- Parish
- Broader community

(All influence and are influenced by the processes of CoSSI)
The Research (iterated by Butler, Otero et al)

Variables Influencing a Child’s Achievement

- Gender, Disability, Ethnicity
- Family
- Social Capital
- Social Class
- Poverty
- Resilience
- Readiness
- Motivation
- Ability

Strategy embedded through School Boards & School Review Process
In planning strategic direction the Strategy challenges schools to be **OUTWARD FACING**

“Schools Without Borders”
Focus

- Parent connectedness
- Community links
- Personalised curriculum
- Community based Enhanced Learning (Sharon Butler & Otero et al)
The Goals

- Shaping a culture of hope filled communities. Faith in every student – Faith in every family

- Unearthing the capacity within school communities to build: every child’s achievement, wellbeing, life chances and spirit of service.

- Copies of the SSEB Parent Leadership & Family Engagement Strategy
Santa Fé Study Tours
2014 - 2015
Principals & Parents

○ Enhancing Family and Community Partnerships through immersion, participation and empowerment
PLFE strategy creates an invitation for deeper conversations

- Intentional - the strategy is not prescriptive nor a tool to provide answers for all
- Together the school and parents can explore the strategy to meet their own needs and priorities in their own timeframes
- Enables conversations that explore engagement vs involvement; belonging vs isolation and more importantly generating ideas for educating/working better together
School Board and Principal leadership is critical

- Together, School Principal, teaching/learning leadership and parents need to engage in what it means to lead and support learning at school and at home (supported by research pie-chart).

- Parents need to be invited and asked what is important to them and their child’s learning rather than be told
Explicit intention to build relationships

- Seeing, listening and talking creates opportunities

- **Learning walks** are pivotal in creating shared wisdom and building relationships between educators, students and parents/families
Learning Walks are Pivotal

- Parents’ own experience of learning and the school environment is vastly different to their child’s
- Parents are vulnerable at different times along their children’s learning journey.
- Parents can feel isolated from their children’s learning at school and uncertain on how to support their child learning at home
- Learning walks allow observations to flow and ideas to emerge which shape future engagement if embraced by the school.
Parent engagement throughout school improvement process

- School improvement strategic plans must have parent engagement in order to change culture and build every child’s achievement, life chances and spirit of service.
- Parent are members of Validation Panels
Parent Perspective Strategic level: Michael Devlin (SSEB Parent Leader)

1. Strategy Developed in Partnership:

Parents, CEO Staff, Researchers & Educators
Parents Lead development of Strategy
Understanding Of Educational needs of Children
and sense of community integral to strategy development
2. Critical Decisions made and endorsed by parents:

- Language
- Aims and Objectives
- Understanding the need for flexibility and being respectful of local community needs - not prescriptive
3. Developing Local communities:

- Moving from My Child to Our Children
- School, Family & Community Partnership,
  - 80/20 rule
4. Resourcing

- People
- Research
- Documentation
- Financial Support
- Future Commitment
Learnings:

- Goals of strategy are life giving to local communities
- Language and Simplicity has been a success
- Professional learning opportunities for parents is empowering local schools/communities
- Patience is required - individual schools progress differently
What would we do differently?

- acknowledge the importance of dialogue
- Primary level focus needs to be more inclusive of secondary schools
- Focus on educational transition points
- Improved education of teachers
Future Directions:

- Engage better with secondary schools
  - Quantify Data and Trends
  - Identify Best practice models
- Build Parent Leadership Capacity
  - Conduct Parent Conference
“Our hope for this strategy is that it may be used by any school community to support the development of opportunities where everyone can make a valid contribution and to build a “culture of community conversation and a culture of sharing”.

“This in turn will reward us with Primary and Secondary schools that firmly sit in the community - which we can proudly describe as “our schools full of our children.”

(The SSEB Parent Leaders)