

Family School Partners

September 2008

Newsletter of the Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau

Welcome to the Bureau's first e-Newsletter

Since our official launch early in August - and for some months before that - I have had the pleasure of getting to know schools, principals, parents and community organisations right across the country who are connecting schools with families and communities. They really are an inspiration to the Bureau.

We're determined to make sure that our work at the Bureau remains faithful to the commitment and energy bubbling away out there.

In this newsletter, I'll tell you a bit about how we're going about that.

We visit schools like [Evatt Primary School](#) here in Canberra, but we also go [much further afield](#). And we invite you to [tell us](#) about your school, your families and how you work together.

The Bureau also talks to organisations and people in the community who might play a role in strengthening family-school partnerships, like [PNE](#) in South Australia.

We seek out and collect all kinds of international research that might help clarify the choices available to us here, like the recent New Zealand [Successful Home-School Partnerships](#) report.

A lot of our own research has gone into the development of the *National Family-School Partnerships Framework*. A [Guide to the Framework](#) is due for publication very soon.

We also collect information about [practical resources](#) for families and schools as they work together. Fortunately, the Internet makes finding and sharing that kind of information easier than it used to be - as easy as clicking some links in an email newsletter.



Cheers,

Brenton

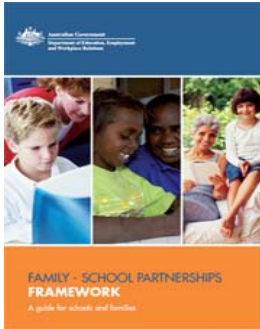
Research and Communications Officer

<http://www.familyschool.org.au>

<mailto:brenton.holmes@familyschool.org.au>

Must Read

National Family-School Partnerships Framework



Very soon, all school principals will receive this **Guide to the National Family-School Partnerships Framework**.

The Framework, agreed to by all state and territory education ministers, sets out the principles for effective partnerships.

PDF copies will be available for download from our website as soon as we get the go ahead from the Minister.

Schools



I've enjoyed several visits over the last couple of weeks to a local Canberra school - **Evatt Primary School**.

Armed with my trusty handycam I've been interviewing the principal, parents, students and community members and documenting the marvellous things they are doing with community gardens and green energy, and involving parents directly in the curriculum.

Evatt Primary sees itself as an important builder of social capital, and provides plenty of opportunity for parents to get together on a social basis - barbecues, outings, dads' breakfasts and the rest. Check out their website at www.evattps.act.edu.au.



Tell us your story

I want to build up a collection of video stories about schools that the Bureau can use to inspire other schools and their communities. If you think you've got a story worth telling, contact me at brenton.holmes@familyschool.org.au

Resources

Community Organisations

Pathways North East

I recently had a call from Mike Farran, who works with **Pathways North East** (PNE) in South Australia. We talked about how the Bureau can link in with organisations like his to connect with parents of students nearing the end of their school years and heading to work or further study.

PNE is one of a network of **Local Community Partnerships** scattered across the country. These LCPs are funded by the Australian government as not-for-profit, community-based and locally operated organisations that deliver career and transition programmes across all Government, Catholic and other non-Government schooling sectors.

The LCPs partner with industry and employer groups, schools, professional career advisers, community organisations, parents, young people, youth service providers and other government and community organisations to assist all young people aged 13-19 years to gain the skills, experience and professional guidance to help them achieve a successful transition through school, and from school to further education, training and employment.

Mike's LCP is linking with the other LCPs in South Australia to develop a marketing strategy that is focused on connecting with South Australian parents to provide information and advice for them about young people making the transition from school to work or further study.

Take a look at their [September newsletter](#) if you're interested in plugging into this network of support.

International Research

Successful Home-School Partnerships

At the Bureau we keep a close eye on policy developments and new research happening across the country and internationally. The **New Zealand** government has recently published a report about parental engagement in schools called **Successful Home-School Partnerships**. This report describes the findings of a research project designed to improve understanding of the key elements of successful home-school partnerships and how they operate in some different school settings.

The report draws on seven international case studies that have data linking home-school partnership initiatives to improvements in student achievement, and four recent evaluations of New Zealand home-school partnership initiatives.

There are also seven New Zealand case studies (and one mini case study). These case studies cover a range of schools including primary and secondary, low and high decile, urban and rural, a special school and a kura kaupapa Maori.

You can read the rest of the Executive Summary [here](#) or the full report [here](#). There's also plenty of general advice offered by parents' groups in overseas countries about connecting with schools. It's worth browsing that advice from time to time to see what's happening elsewhere and what might work here.

Web Links from Around the World

United States of America

ParentInvolvementMatters



ParentInvolvementMatters.Org is a leading resource in helping educators, parent leaders, consultants and trainers who are working to increase family involvement in schools.

In their latest [e-newsletter](#) they talk about the power of story-telling as a way to build Family-School Partnerships.

"Research has long shown, that despite personal and cultural differences, people who share stories form a common bond. Within our stories are found common threads of experience that lead to new learning, a sense of community, and collective action."

Scotland

ParentZone



Lorraine Sanda posted the following comment on our website, "I am really interested to see your developments and wish the Bureau lots of success.

We introduced some legislation in Scotland in 2006 which aimed to strengthen parental representation and home/school partnerships.

My role as National Parental Involvement Coordinator with Learning and Teaching Scotland is to drive forward this agenda.

I am sure there is much we could share and learn from each other. You may get some more information [here](#), but please get in touch with me, if I can be of any help. Best of luck."

Research Visits

During September and October, Dr Denis Muller and I head off on some research visits to what we call our 'case studies' schools. These are schools which participated in the **Family-School Partnerships Project** back in 2005. You can read about that project [here](#).

We want to find out how those partnerships have evolved - what's enabled them to be sustainable, what have the spin-offs been, and so on.

We're also visiting some schools who were not involved in the 2005 project, but who have come to our attention as schools who are doing some interesting things to engage effectively with families and their communities.

I'm heading for Adelaide to visit **Unley High School** and **Magill Primary**, and to speak about the Bureau's work to parents at the **National Conference of the Australian Parents Council**. My colleague, Dr Denis Muller will be there too; then Denis heads further west to conduct research on partnerships in a Catholic primary and a government high school in Western Australia.

I'm heading in the opposite direction, and will be participating in a **Parents Expo** in Dubbo organised by the NSW Education Department. I know I'll see Noel Cuttiford - a parent from **Bathurst High School** - at the Expo.

Maybe I'll catch a few others of you while I'm there.

Please send your comments and suggestions for our newsletter to <mailto:info@familyschool.org.au>

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