



Family-School
& Community
Partnerships
Bureau



Family School Partners

June 2009

Newsletter of the Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau

Welcome to the Bureau's seventh e-Newsletter

It's hard to believe the first half of the year is nearly over. The Bureau has been preparing its plans for the 2009-10 financial year, and there is much to be done. We are hoping to increase our engagement with Indigenous communities, to work closely with other national organisations concerned with the educational needs of disadvantaged communities, and to create a professional development package for teachers and principals on how to build and strengthen connections with parents, families and communities.

We'll continue to keep you in touch with relevant and important matters about family-school partnerships from both an Australian and international perspective. Please forward this newsletter to friends and colleagues who might be interested, and tell them that they can subscribe by going to our website <http://www.familyschool.org.au> and entering their email address.

First Things

NAIDOC Week: 5th-12th July 2009

Parents Communities and their schools across the country will be celebrating NAIDOC Week during the week of July 5-12 this year.

What is your school community doing for its Celebration?

For schools who will be on vacation during that week, what will you be doing to celebrate Indigenous Australia?

Read more at <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=697>



SCHOOLS FIRST – rewarding successful partnerships - \$5million per year available



In each Newsletter we have reminded people about the NAB Schools First initiative that offers awards for successful partnerships between schools, families and communities. The latest advice is that application packages will be available on the Schools First website sometime between now and July 1. Keep an eye out, and we'll let you know as soon as we see them online.

There are two categories of award: IMPACT AWARDS for partnerships that are up and running, and SEED FUNDING for schools that want to get a partnership off the ground.

Click here to get the basic guidelines on what your application will need to consider: <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/sf-winning-awards/index.php>

Australian Awards for Teaching Excellence 2009

Reminder: Nominations close 19 June for this opportunity to celebrate excellence in schools and recognise the achievements of teachers, principals, support staff and schools. If there's someone you know who is going above and beyond and making a difference, or a school community that shines, help them get the recognition they deserve.

Go to <http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au/ta/go/home/op/edit/pid/594>

The awards will be made in the six categories, with more than \$1million in prizes ...

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=621>



Doing the Family-School Thing Well

We constantly keep our eyes out for reports and articles about good ideas and successful examples of schools engaging parents and communities effectively. Our research is showing that a great way for schools to engage with their students' families is to connect with and support those families *even before they officially enrol their children in the school.*

There are some great things happening all around the country. Here's a few stories from Victoria:

Healthy relationships in every respect



PlayTime! Project, run by The Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, is an innovative approach to school and community partnerships.

PlayTime is an innovative approach to providing nutrition and healthy lifestyle information to families.

Along the way the workers have found they have also helped build healthier relationships between the school and the community.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=699>

Indigenous Partnerships showing the way I

One Arm Point Remote Community School is a K-11 school located 200km north of Broome on the Dampier Peninsular. Of the school's approximately 100 students, 95 per cent are Indigenous.

The Bardi Cultural Program (BCP). The BCP has been introduced in response to a need identified by local Elders and other Bardi people. It is a means to involving Elders, capturing local community knowledge and history and weaving it into the school curriculum. Through a process of community consultation the school developed a cultural studies program.

An old classroom has been made into a cultural museum and serves as a narration of the cultural learning journeys that have been captured through the cultural studies program. It is now also used for the teaching of the local indigenous language of Bardi.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=701>

Indigenous Partnerships showing the way II

Willmot Public School is a Government K-6 school in a low socio-economic suburb in the west of Sydney. Of its 250 students, 55 are Indigenous.



Playgroup. This provides opportunities for Indigenous parents to interact and expose children to pre-Literacy and pre-Numeracy skills.

Willmot Wizards. A transition to school program which aims to provide a prior-to-school experience for children who will be entering Kindergarten the following year.

Parent Program. Provides Indigenous parents with the opportunity to gain knowledge in teaching their children Literacy skills at home in the early years.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=704>

Helping your student at home

Through our networks, both Australian and overseas, we pick up hundreds of tips from education journals and magazines about what parents can do to help with their children's learning at home. We include a sample in every Newsletter, and it seems that they're pretty popular ... so we'll keep doing it as long as we reckon the ideas are worth passing on.

What did YOU learn at school today?

Have you ever asked your child what they learnt at school today? Chances are you were met with the all too familiar, "not much" or even worse, "nothing". Before you go ringing the school to find out why your child isn't learning anything, take in the latest research on children's learning, which just might make you think about asking a different question altogether when they come home from a day at school.

Stephen Dinham, Research Director at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) says, "Don't ask them what they did today, what they enjoyed at school or what they learnt, ask them, 'What feedback did you get about your learning today?'" In parent-to-child language, this means ask your kids, "What did your teacher say about your work today?"

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=707>

How to Read with a Beginning Reader

By Joanne Meier, Reading Rockets

Sometimes parents of beginning readers wonder if their child is on track with reading. They don't understand why their child can't read a word today they were able to read yesterday. They grumble that their child only wants to read the same book over and over again.

Most beginning readers are inconsistent. They may read a particular word correctly on one page, but they have to stop and sound it out again on the next page. When you listen to a beginning reader, you hear short, choppy words with little attention to punctuation. Sometimes a new reader can tell you very little about what they just read.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=709>

Decimals in the Real World

Around Grade Four, students learn about decimals as parts of a whole. In plain terms, this means that by the end of the year, students should be able to read, write, add and subtract decimals to the hundredths. This new way of looking at numbers can be tricky, but the good news is that you can help your child develop their skills using something you do every day: shop!

Our monetary system is a great way to practice using decimals to the hundreds place. In earlier grades, your child should have learned to recognize dollars and cents. Now take it to a new level: if you buy five sweaters for \$19.99, what is the total cost? Add it up without rounding, and make sure your child can read out the exact total both in decimal numbers and in money terms.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=711>

Research

Starting up - a research perspective on school-community partnerships

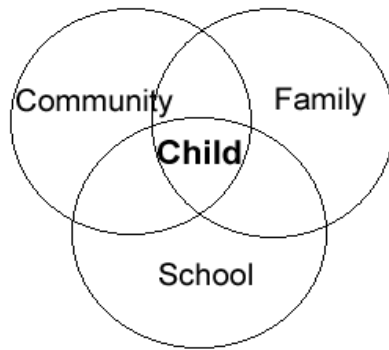


Figure 1: Epstein's model of interrelating factors on a child.

What happens at your school in the morning? Are there parents listening to groups of children reading and helping in the canteen? Are parents collecting money for book club or helping out with an excursion? Perhaps a parent is sharing professional knowledge with a class.

Many schools have parents in helping roles but what about the untapped skills and talents of parents and people in the wider community, which the school could use for the benefit of students?

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=713>

Parents and Schools in Partnership

Parents and teachers have more influence than peers

A University of Sydney study has found that getting on well with parents and teachers has a strong positive influence on adolescents' academic outcomes - and a bigger influence than getting on with peers.

"Parents and teachers who might feel powerless during adolescence have a bigger influence on academic motivation than they think - sometimes up to three times the impact of peers," said Andrew Martin, an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education and Social Work and the study's lead researcher.

"If you think you have no impact, stick with it because you do, and not just in the early years - at all stages of secondary school teachers and parents have a significant impact."

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=715>

This Digital Life

This is a section in our e-Newsletter dedicated to engaging parents with an area of education that is becoming increasingly significant – ICT, cyberspace and the rest. During the recent Focus Group discussions with parents, some people were surprised to learn of the kinds of online initiatives that are being developed by education authorities, so I thought we should start drawing some of them to parents' attention.

The world of technology isn't a bad place

It is a very positive one. It has revolutionised the way kids communicate, recreate and learn.

But that's not to say it's problem-free. Instead of demonising it, recognising its importance, the issues, and considering how they should be dealt with so technology can be used as positively as possible.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=717>

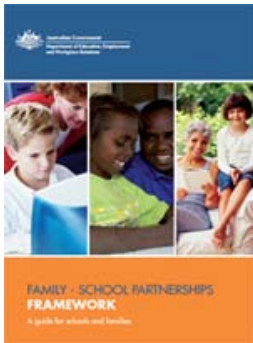
Have your say about the concept of a networked school community

Associate Professor Glenn Finger and Mal Lee are currently working upon an ACER Press publication for release next year called *Developing a Networked School Community – and Creating a Home-School Nexus*. It is their contention that the networked school community will be the next phase in the on-going evolution of formal schooling.

As the school walls come down and the networks open the way for schools to operate upon a much wider playing field so schooling will become ever more networked and collaborative. The reality is that the schools can, and are making the shift to the networked mode today.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=719>

National Family-School Partnerships Framework



Has your school, or your P&C, received its copy of the **Guide to the National Family-School Partnerships Framework**.

You can download a copy from our website at <http://www.familyschool.org.au/pdf/framework.pdf> or I can send you out a hard copy if you email me with your postal address at info@familyschool.org.au.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=506>

Bits 'n' Pieces

Here's where we draw your attention to some things that might pique your interest:

Supporting your child's sexuality

For many parents, the dawning realisation - or sudden news - that your son or daughter is gay, lesbian or bisexual can at first be hard to comprehend.

Parents don't often think about whether their own children are attracted to someone of the same sex – and as Ian Glascott from Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Victoria (PFLAG) explains, discovering your son or daughter is homosexual can be very difficult for parents, for the son or daughter, and for other family members.

“When you find out, you don't know where to turn,” he says. “You think: what sort of life are they going to have; how is it going to affect them? You think about yourself: I'm not going to have grandkids; there's going to be no wedding; how am I going to tell the family?”

Read more at <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=721>

Hugh Mackay's latest essay : 'Real Communities'

Belonging? Community? Shared values? These, surely, have become the weasel words of contemporary social analysis.

Overblown and overplayed, they have been robbed of much of their meaning. They have come to sound more like mantras than social goals. Indeed, the word 'village' is de rigueur if you're writing a real estate advertisement or creating a promotional brochure for a new high-rise development: the vertical village is with us.

It's even become fashionable to speak of 'the Australian community', as if Australians were a close-knit little group, sharing in the life of some village where everyone knows everyone, everyone trusts everyone, and from which we draw a powerful and sustaining sense of identity and emotional security.

Yet we cling hopefully, and sometimes desperately, to words like community and village, precisely because we know, deep in our guts, that any successful, civilised society would aspire to that utopian prospect.

Read more: <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=723>



Tell us your story

The Bureau wants to build up a collection of video stories about schools that we can use to inspire other schools and their communities.

If you've got one worth telling, contact me at brenton.holmes@familyschool.org.au.

Regards

Brenton Holmes

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