



Family-School
& Community
Partnerships
Bureau



Family School Partners July 2009

First Things

Parents: Involved in Schooling and Engaged in Learning

By Danielle Cronin

Most of us don't need 40 years of research to tell us that parent involvement is important for children's success at school and in life.

Involvement in your child's education can take many forms including being involved at the school (as class parents, on the P&F, at working bees) or at home (helping with homework, reading to your children, involving them in extra-curricular activities or just being interested in what they do at school).



More recent research however is telling us that deeper forms of parent *engagement* with schooling are also needed to further enhance student achievement and outcomes, close achievement gaps and build social capital and social inclusion.

Read more at <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=760>

Bullying. No Way!

The **Bullying. No way!** website (www.bullyingnoway.com.au) supports school staff, students and parents/carers in the ongoing task of creating safer, more inclusive school communities free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence.

The website emphasises the value of locally relevant and sustainable whole school approaches that address individual, environmental and psychological dimensions of behaviour, including discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, ability and socioeconomic class.

Features include *The Issues* - an exploration of the underlying factors, an *Ideas* box of practical activities, *Profiles* of people who have made a difference, *Forums* for teachers, parents and students and a *Chill out* space with activities for young people.

BNW also has an e-bulletin which is posted to subscribers on a monthly basis. It highlights useful research, resources and additions to the Bullying. No way! website, as well as what's happening around Australia's Government, Catholic and Independent education sectors.

Visit the home page: <http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au>

Doing the Family-School Thing Well

Cultural Awareness Builds School-Community Partnerships

Getting in touch with the different cultures in a school community can present a way to build and strengthen family school partnerships.



The benefits of bringing representatives of local cultural communities into school and giving the exploration and understanding of those cultures a curricular value is illustrated in this video about **Nagle College** in Bairnsdale, Victoria.

<http://www.vimeo.com/5269042>

You'll see that this is presented by the **NAB Schools First** initiative - as we have reminded you for the last few months, this program is offering \$5 million in funds to reward successful partnerships between schools, families and communities.

Applications close **14 August 2009** : <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/>

Helping your student at home

Homework: What are the upsides and downsides?

Like it or loathe it - and those two extremes are equally well represented among students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators and policy-makers - **homework** is sometimes the most visible manifestation of a relationship between a family and the school their children attend.

By bringing school tasks home, students reveal something of their curricular activities to parents, and how well they complete their homework gives teachers some insight into how a family regards educational tasks.

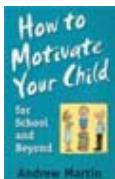
So what are the arguments for and against homework, what are the implications for students' educational outcomes and how can this issue help to shape positive family-school partnerships?

Researchers from the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) have recently updated a paper on this topic.

Download the PDF: <http://tinyurl.com/mornzn>

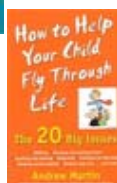
How to Motivate Your Child

Dr Andrew Martin is an Associate Professor at Sydney University.



He says: "Motivation is a vital ingredient in your child's achievement, enjoyment and happiness at school. Motivation refers to your child's energy and drive to learn, work effectively, and achieve their potential at school. Motivation is not only relevant to high school students, it is also very important for students in the early years of school.

very



To be most effective in increasing your child's motivation, it is important to be specific about what particular parts of your child's motivation need to be

improved. It is also important to be specific about what particular parts of your child's motivation are strengths and need to be sustained".

Dr Martin offers specific advice in his two books:

How to Motivate Your Child - for School and Beyond : <http://tinyurl.com/mkofrt>

How to Help Your Child Fly Through Life - the 20 Big Issues: <http://tinyurl.com/mef38b>

"What are you going to do when you leave school?"

If you've ever watched *So You Think You Can Dance* or *Australian Idol* and listened to the contestants tell their life story, it's as if they knew from the age of three that they were destined to become a dancer or a singer.

Many children grow up just like this on their path from a young age and many others finish Year 12 and still have no idea what they want to do.

Maureen Jones , Chatswood High School's careers adviser, is all too aware of the difficulties parents face at this time. "It's the first big real decision of your child's life," she says. But her advice is crystal clear: "Parents can be guides, but their kids have to make their own decisions."

Read more: <http://tinyurl.com/nkgqnc>

Research

Family-School Partnership Lab

The **Family-School Partnership Lab** is part of the Psychology and Human Development Department, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University in Nashville, USA, and is dedicated to the scientific investigation of the reciprocal relationships among families, schools, and children.

Their website contains information on papers and measures developed during the course of research on the parental involvement process.

While a lot of this information - like many academic reports - is dense and expressed in terms that seem stilted, it's significant that "One goal of [a recent] three-year research program was effective and helpful communication of study findings to participating schools".

The Lab achieved this goal by producing reports for participating on its research, offering specific and informed suggestions for enhancing family school relationships.

You'll find a link to an MS Word **report to a school** here: <http://tinyurl.com/kpzg2o>.

It's also worth having a look through the rest of the site: <http://tinyurl.com/ldyjqp>.

School-parent partnerships

Subtitled "*Emerging strategies to promote innovation in schools*", this report by Anne Page with Shekhar Das, Wilma Mangabeira and Lara Natale published in March 2009 by the **Family and Parenting Institute** in the UK puts a bit of a dent in the budget at a price of £15.00, but ...

"Parents make a vital contribution to their children's education, and strong partnerships between schools and parents can enhance children's learning. This innovative report presents the views of primary and secondary school staff, parents and children. The report points the way forward and suggests key triggers for schools, including strong leadership and a culture of consultation with parents, children and school staff.

It includes:

- full findings of recent research
- a comprehensive resources section, including real-life examples, case studies, topic guides and factsheets for parents and schools
- models for building strong school-parent partnerships.

This book is essential reading for anyone involved in developing effective partnerships between schools and parents."

Has anyone read it? Go to the web page: <http://tinyurl.com/mtxb92>

From Periphery to Center

A New Vision for Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Written by Harvard Family Research Project's Heather Weiss and Naomi Stephen, this chapter—which will appear in the *Handbook of School–Family Partnerships*, edited by Sandy Christenson, Ph.D. and Amy Reschley, Ph.D.—presents a comprehensive, integrated family, school, and community partnership framework that can help level the playing field for disadvantaged children and ensure that they have access to the parental involvement and community engagement practices of their more advantaged peers in order to enhance their learning.

The authors discuss the strong developmental research case for family–school–community partnerships and emphasize the need for continued evaluations to demonstrate the types of partnerships and involvement practices that are best correlated with positive student outcomes.

Instead of narrowly defining education reform as initiatives that take place within the walls of K–12 school buildings, Weiss and Stephen argue for the need to address the wide range of external factors that influence children's learning success, and illustrate how family–school–community partnerships provide opportunities to broaden our definition of schooling and understanding about where learning takes place.

Read more: <http://tinyurl.com/l6t8oh>

This Digital Life

VPC Family School Partnerships

The **Victorian Parents Council** maintains a section of its excellent website focused on Family School Partnerships at <http://tinyurl.com/mty8cy>, drawing together information particularly relevant to non-government school communities in Victoria - but also informative and inspiring for parents and teachers everywhere - in a well-structured and easy-to-use format.

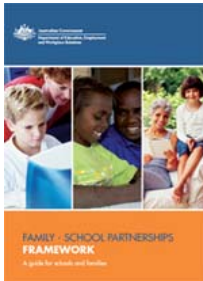
"Children flourish where there is a strong relationship between schools and parents. The more parents are involved with their children's education and school, the greater the child's chances of success.

Opportunities for involvement vary from school to school from volunteering in the classroom, tuckshop, on excursions, through to active participation in parents' and friends' groups and sitting on school councils.

However limited your ability to be involved, it is worth the effort. Children love to see their parents at school."

The VPC website as a whole is a terrific resource for anyone interested in fostering positive family-school and community relationships: <http://tinyurl.com/kj9yk4>

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 email info@familyschool.org.au to have a hard copy mailed to you (make sure you include a mailing address).

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

Bits 'n' Pieces

US Parent Teacher Magazine website relaunched

The actual resource referred to here may or may not be directly useful to Australian school communities, but the idea of a print resource on improving family-school partnerships that is provided free to school communities is a very attractive one.

Would our school communities benefit from a resource like this?

"Parent Teacher Magazine was created in 1994 to allow local school systems to communicate with parents, children, teachers and community.

Our goal is to bring together the community and each school system to promote involvement and unity. We strive to make all information easily accessible in an effort to inform the parents of community offerings and school happenings.

Parent Teacher Magazine is unique in two important ways. We are the only magazine in the school systems informing the parents of school happenings, and we are the only non-educational magazine that is approved by the school system for classroom distribution.

No other media source serves the school systems and the community in this manner. Each school system uses *Parent Teacher Magazine* as a way to highlight outstanding achievements by students, teachers and community partners as well as inform the parents of changes in the school system.

The school systems receive *Parent Teacher Magazine* at NO COST.

The magazine is supported solely by our sponsors. Our sponsors are businesses that truly care about our children and the community.

Elementary schools receive their copies, which are then distributed to the students who take them home in their back packs.

Copies are also placed in the offices of middle and high schools for parents to pick up."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nt8e5q>

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

NCPIE was founded in the US in 1980, at the initiative of what was then the National School Volunteer Program (now National Association for Partners in Education), with funding from the Ford Foundation and Union Carbide.

From the outset, the participating organizations included parent organizations and advocacy groups as well as national education organizations representing teachers and administrators. The group has been meeting monthly ever since to monitor legislation, initiate projects, and share information and ideas about research, programs, and policies.

"At NCPIE, our mission is simple: to advocate the involvement of parents and families in their children's education, and to foster relationships between home, school, and community to enhance the education of all our nation's young people.

Our coalition seeks to:

- Serve as a visible representative for strong parent and family involvement initiatives at the national level.
- Conduct activities that involve the coalition's member organizations and their affiliates and constituencies in efforts to increase family involvement.
- Provide resources and legislative information that can help member organizations promote parent and family involvement."

Go to the NCPIE website: <http://www.ncpie.org/>.



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. Contact us at info@familyschool.org.au.

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

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