



Family-School
& Community
Partnerships
Bureau



Family School Partners

October 2009

First Things

SCHOOLS FIRST – rewarding successful partnerships



Last issue, you might have read about the 20 **Seed Funding Award** winners for 2009 announced on 7 September. Full list with project descriptions is at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/sf-2009-awards-winners/index.phps>. The **Local Impact Award** winners in each state/territory have now also been announced. Read the full list of winners at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/sf-2009-awards-winners/impact-awards.phps> and browse each school's project.

The **State Impact Award** winners in each state/territory will be announced between 22 and 29 October. Read the full schedule of winner announcements at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/sf-stories/announcement-of-schools-first-award-winners.phps>.

With awards funding of \$5 million every year for three years, Schools First is a national awards program that provides financial recognition of success in establishing effective school-community partnerships and financial support to build stronger school-community partnerships.

Read more at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/>

Family School Partnerships 2.0

As a subscriber to an email newsletter, there's a fair chance that you are familiar with terms like the Internet, the World Wide Web and, more recently, Web 2.0. Even if you are clear on what those terms broadly mean, can you say that you understand the concepts and technologies well enough to see their potential for enhancing family school partnerships?

In this edition of Family School Partners we're going to look at how some people are using the web and related technologies to build school-community partnerships.

Just Two Paragraphs of Explanation

The **Internet** is the physical linking of computers through cables, networks and servers, on a global scale. The **World Wide Web** is information presented as content, linked using hypertext and experienced through software including browsers. The Internet is the backbone of the Web.

Web 2.0 refers to the second wave of content flourishing on the Web following the dotcom boom and bust of the 1990s. This second wave is characterised by an unprecedented level of social interaction and interactivity: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many.

People for Education



People for Education is a Canadian parent-led organisation working to support public education in the English, French and Catholic schools of Ontario.

It was started in 1996, initially a small group of parents in Toronto concerned about fundraising and about cuts to education budgets.

"When we started there was an atmosphere of division and polarization in the education system. Teachers were fighting with the provincial government; the provincial government was fighting with school boards; and parents were caught in the middle. It was hard for parents to find objective information about what was going on, because all sides in the fights were saying that they were "putting children first."

We decided there needed to be someone providing information parents could trust. Information that was as objective as we could make it, that was in plain language, and that was based in fact.

We developed a survey that now goes to all schools in the province so that we could report each year on the effects of policy and funding changes on schools. That way parents and school councils could understand that policy wasn't something abstract and inaccessible. And we hoped that by assisting parents and school communities in understanding that policy eventually has an effect – on our schools, our children, and our communities; that we are all capable of having an effect on policy.

None of the parents who run People for Education are educators – we're former lawyers, real estate agents, accountants, designers, business women, stay at home parents, editors, and students. Since our beginnings as parent activists in the mid 90s, we've matured as an organization, so that now we occupy a fairly unique position on the educational landscape. We are equally at home in the land of parents, of academics, educators and policy makers. In fact, we act as a kind of bridge between all those worlds."

People for Education now runs an online community that provides an effective model for online, mutually supportive, parent-focused discussion of education issues.

Read more at <http://schools-at-the-centre.ning.com/>

Web Child



This is a good example of a familiar and localised Australian print resource extending into an online presence with a national focus.

If you are familiar with the large format city-focused magazines on parenting known as *Sydney's Child*, *Melbourne's Child* etc, you'll have an idea of the content of **Web Child**.

As well as the news, opinion, reviews, resources, tips and (most especially) the stories from parents you find in the print versions, Web Child also has a Tech Talk column. The most recent, published 22 October, is called **Social networking rules for online kids** by Sara Howard, a set of five simple, conservative guidelines for parents.

Rule number one: Time, please

This doesn't mean that social networking sites are inherently dangerous. In fact, for some kids they can have tremendous benefits - shy children, for example, can develop communication skills and confidence in a 'safe' environment.

But, like any other screen-based activity, we do need to put limits on the amount of time our kids spend using these sites. And make sure they are also spending their waking hours playing in real-life with their friends - not just instant messaging them.

Read more at <http://www.webchild.com.au/>

Parents as Partners

Parents as Partners is the blog of Canadian **Lorna Costantini**.

"I am a former trustee, a parent advocate, family studies teacher and a realtor. I recently helped facilitate a parent involvement project with the Niagara Catholic District School Board and the Board wide Parent Involvement committee, the Niagara Catholic Regional School Council. The project involved a focus group of parents and educators developing resources and program to assist parents and teachers form strong working relationships while supporting student learning.a forum for parents and educators to discuss issues related to parents and schools. "



A blog, abbreviated from 'web log' is an online diary, a journal in which one person posts their opinions and - generally - invites other people to comment, perhaps sparking a discussion.

The great thing about the blog format is that the blogger can not only say what they want as often as they want, but can easily add video, audio, photos, forms, downloadable files, links and more.

Lorna Costantini's latest blog post, on 17th October, started like this:

Parents use the internet to get back at teachers.

A principal's worst nightmare is the havoc a disgruntled parent can have on their own reputation, the school's reputation, a teacher's reputation or even the reputation of a student. It is hard enough when the chatter is spread through the parking lot but take the attacks to the global stage and there is no end of stress and anger with one-sided and biased viewpoints filling the pipe.

Read more at <http://www.ourschool.ca/>

Ms Costantini participated in an online discussion on 19 October on the topic of both encouraging and moderating parent engagement with schools in an online environment.

Listen online or download the audio at <http://www.edtechtalk.com/node/4575>

Incidentally, EdTechTalk itself is a great resource: <http://www.edtechtalk.com/>.

Classroom 2.0



Steve Hargadon is the director of the K12 Open Technologies Initiative at the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) in the US and the founder of Classroom 2.0. He travels across the United States, speaking and consulting on educational technology, Web 2.0, social networking, free and open source software, computer reuse, and computing for low-income populations.

Classroom 2.0 is an online meeting place for educators interested in using the Web to build better relationships with their peers, students, parents and local communities.

If you want to see an online community of teachers in action, start at <http://www.classroom20.com/profile/SteveHargadon> and follow the links, threads and pathways.

Steve Hargadon is coming to Australia in November as a keynote speaker at the 2009 Annual Conference of the Victorian Information Technology Teachers Association, whose members comprise primary and secondary Information Technology teachers, tertiary educators, and any person with an interest in Information Technology education.

Read more at <http://www.vitta.org.au/conferenceinfo/cid/1/parent/1/pid/1/t/conferenceinfo/title/vitta-annual-conference-2009>



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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