



Department of
Education

Public education
A world of opportunities

A resource for principals to use with their school community

Engaging and Working with your Community Framework

Engaging and working with the community



Excellence in schools requires a commitment to continuous improvement and quality whole school self-assessment. Highly effective schools direct their energies and resources towards the improvement of learning to maximise achievement and realise the potential of all students. They are committed to making a difference by developing an explicit improvement agenda that is shared and understood by the school and the wider community.

Research shows that the most successful schools engage students, families, carers and the community as partners in supporting student learning and wellbeing.

There is strong evidence that family-school engagement is associated with significant improvements in academic achievement for students of all ages. Robust research also links family engagement to the improvement of other outcomes including early literacy acquisition, school readiness, attendance, motivation, self-regulatory behaviour, social skills, retention and graduation.

Western Australia comprises a diverse range of school communities, students, parents, families and teachers. Diversity should be celebrated and supported through an inclusive culture that promotes the skills and insights of all people irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, generation, sexual orientation or disability.

Responding to the diversity may require additional strategies and considerations when forming collaborative relationships, to ensure that the needs of the individual are considered and information is targeted to the specific audience.

Culturally responsive schools also foster positive participation, communication and interaction between staff, Aboriginal students, their parents and families, and the local Aboriginal community.

It is important that the strategies used within a particular school or classroom are an effective match with the needs of teachers, parents and students, and that there is genuine commitment to improving learning and wellbeing outcomes together.

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“Partnerships between students, parents, carers and families, the broader community, business, schools and other education and training providers bring mutual benefits and maximise student engagement and achievement. Partnerships engender support for the development and wellbeing of young people and their families and can provide opportunities for young Australians to connect with their communities, participate in civic life and develop a sense of responsible citizenship. In particular, the development of partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities, based on cross-cultural respect, is the main way of achieving highly effective schooling for Indigenous students”.

- Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008)

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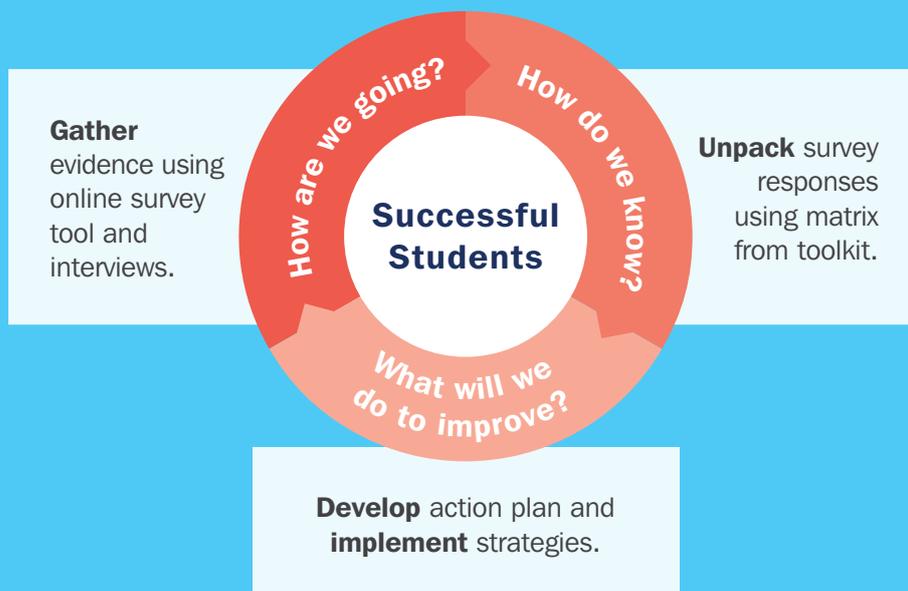
VISION By partnering together – staff, students, families and communities can improve the education outcomes for all students.

Western Australian Public Schools use a range of strategies to successfully engage with their communities. The Engaging and Working with your Community Framework recognises that many positive developments and innovations are already occurring in schools and it is not a one size fits all approach to partnerships. The Framework has been developed to support schools to build on these partnerships, to directly influence the quality of learning. The Framework is underpinned by broad principles and strategies but remains specific to school context, including family and community characteristics, school size and student needs.

5 key domains of engaging and working with your community



How can schools use the Framework to strengthen their approaches?



The Framework contains:

- Vision for improved partnerships between families and schools
- Five key domains of engaging and working with the community to make a positive difference in our students' education

Engaging and working with your community toolkit which contains:

- Principles to guide families and schools in developing partnerships
- Strategies providing practical guidance to school communities and school systems in implementing and fostering family-school partnerships
- Online survey tool for schools to use with their school community to help inform an action plan to strengthen their approaches
- Evaluation matrix to help unpack survey responses
- Action plan templates with examples
- Case studies
- Videos

Benefits to schools, students and families resulting from increased family engagement:

- National and international research reports students achieve better education outcomes when schools, families and the community work together to support student learning
- Development of stronger connections to the community, and greater family and community satisfaction with the school. The image and position of the school in the community is raised
- Students have improved self-esteem, better attendance and behaviour, deeper engagement in learning and improved literacy and numeracy outcomes
- Families gain a greater understanding of their child's learning needs and progress. Families feel a sense of support from their school that gives them confidence in their child's learning environment

State and national documents aligned to engaging and working with your community

School Improvement and Accountability Framework

Western Australian Public Schools are part of the community in which they are located and they provide a crucial service to that community. It is both a requirement and advantageous for schools to build a strong relationship with their community capable of responding to local needs and shaping a sense of pride in the school.

Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework

The Framework supports all Department of Education staff to reflect on their approaches to the education of Aboriginal students. It sets expected standards for all staff when working with Aboriginal students, their families and communities.

Principal Performance Improvement Tool

Highly effective principals build mutually beneficial relationships with families, other schools, external organisations and the local community for the purposes of sharing experiences and expertise, enhancing opportunities for students, and better meeting individual learning needs.

Australian Professional Standards for Principals

Principals build partnerships with the local community and external stakeholders so they are aware of the vision and values of the school and can contribute to its success.

National School Improvement Tool

Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education.

What are family-school partnerships?

Highly effective school leaders build strong family-school and community relationships by creating a culture of welcome inclusion. They understand and connect with parents and the wider community around a shared responsibility for student learning and wellbeing. They see how things can be better, and plan for the time and resources to make it happen.

Highly effective school leaders set family engagement as a priority and make it a core part of 'how we do things here'.

Family-school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents and other family members of students at a school. Effective partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, and shared responsibility for the education of the children and young people at the school.

Genuine family-school partnerships exist when there is a meaningful relationship between families and teachers with the shared goal of maximising learning and wellbeing outcomes for students.

Family-school partnerships need to be strategic, embedded in school life, collaborative and with shared responsibility.

Why are family-school partnerships important?

Family-school partnerships extend beyond family involvement in volunteering at the school, to having a deliberate focus on influencing and improving learning opportunities and wellbeing outcomes. Families are provided with ideas and strategies and are encouraged to collaborate with the school and community to strengthen partnerships and directly assist in supporting their child's learning. Effective family-school partnerships create authentic relationships valued by each party.

We don't just enrol kids; we need to know their stories.

Message from WACSSO

For almost 100 years, the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc. (WACSSO) have worked passionately with school organisations across this state to improve the public education system – all the while never losing sight of a simple principle: that we are stronger together.

Families are the first, and lifelong educators of their children, and they continue to influence their children's learning both during and after their formal years of schooling.

We recognise the benefit of building authentic partnerships, and the shared responsibility of families, schools and communities for improved student outcomes.

WACSSO, together with the P&C community and all our stakeholders, work tirelessly to advance public education in Western Australia, so that every student has the best chance to realise their potential and live the life they deserve.



Kylie Catto,
WACSSO President

July 2019

What do strong family-school partnerships look like?

Mount Lockyer Primary School

If you were to walk into our school, you would see a presence of several generations of families in the school interacting with their children. Above all, it is about the child's learning and families visibly sharing in that journey. Our families are active, authentic partners with us in the education of our kids, this is the way we do business.



Maxine Augustson, Principal



Phil White, Principal

Melville Senior High School

Earning the trust of families and the wider community has been a key driver of the success of Melville Senior High School. We believe that effective partnerships are based on positive communication and a shared responsibility for the education of the students at our school. This is the High Performance-High Care culture that is so critical to being a successful school.

Edney Primary School

Edney is a safe, happy and positive school where all members of our community, staff, students and parents feel valued, listened to and supported to be their best. Open and transparent communication and multiple opportunities for consultation and collaboration ensure families are not only involved in the school, but are truly engaged and valued: a powerful catalyst for improving outcomes for all. Together we're nurturing the future.



Aaron Chaplin, Principal



Judith King, Principal

East Kalgoorlie Primary School

Relationships are the key to the success of our school. Relationships with the children and the families, making sure they feel welcome and are each a valued member of our school. We build relationships with services and agencies and with outside organisations such as mining companies, as they can see the impact we are having on our community. It is a whole community working together to impact on the lives of our little people.