

EDUCATION CAPITAL:

Progressing Parental Engagement

Parent Fact Sheet

When families and schools work together, children are more likely to build good relationships and do better at school.

There are simple things parents can do at home, and with their child's school, to help their child to do their best. Showing children that education is important, building their confidence and connecting with their school helps to shape children's learning and well-being.

The impact parents can have

Parents and families are children's first teachers and they continue to help their children to learn and thrive throughout the school years. When their family's love and support is combined with the expert knowledge of teachers, it can have a significant and lasting impact:

- Children can be more likely to enjoy learning and be motivated to do well
- Children can have better relationships with other children, improved behaviour and greater confidence
- Children can do better at school and are more likely to graduate and go on to college, TAFE or university
- Children can be less likely to miss days at school

There are simple things parents can do that have a big impact

At home: Many things families do to help children thrive – such as healthy eating, being active and showing affection – are very important. Parents have the biggest impact on children's learning when they help children to believe in themselves and to enjoy learning new things.

With your child's school: Teachers are experts in learning and can help you to help your child learn. The best starting point is to keep the lines of communication open between yourself and your child's teacher.

What are the most important things parents can do?

Research shows that the following activities at home and with schools can have the biggest impact for children.

At home you can

Believe in your child's potential	Believing in your child rubs off and has an influence on how well they do at school. Showing children that you believe in them and their ability to do their best and go on to be successful is one of the most powerful things you can do.
Read together	Reading together helps children to develop and practise their reading, writing and language skills. Telling stories and talking about things that they're interested in helps them enjoy learning. You can read in the language you speak at home.
Talk with your child	Just spending time talking with your child helps them to learn and grow. Simple ways to do this include talking about what they're learning at school and what they enjoy or find difficult. You can also remember and chat about the fun times your family has spent together or talk about big ideas – such as the things you and your family believe in, science and nature or important issues in the community.
Create a good homework environment	The things you can do to get the most out of homework are building your child's confidence and supporting them to be able to learn on their own – the best ways to help them will change as they get older. Find them a quiet space to study and try to make homework a calm experience. If you are helping your child, try and make sure it's a nice time for you to spend together. It's good to have rules about homework, but it's important to not create confusion by pushing children to do more, or expecting them to do less, than the school asks. You can talk to your child's teacher if you have questions about homework.
Support good relationships	Parents can help children develop friendships and get along with other people, including their teacher. Children tend to do better when they get on with their teacher. Children also tend to enjoy learning and being at school when they have strong friendships.
Learn about the world together	Children learn by exploring new things and finding new interests. This can include everyday activities like cooking or grocery shopping, or going to community events, museums or libraries.

With your child's school you can

Support two way communication	Good communication between parents and teachers makes sure everyone is on the same page. It also helps teachers know if there is anything outside school that may be affecting your child. It's okay to ask for advice to help your child or ask questions about what's happening at school. To work together, parents and teachers should respect each other's roles and experience. Simple ways to stay in touch include information from school (e.g. notes, newsletters and website updates), face-to-face meetings, email and phone contact during agreed contact hours.
Get involved in your school community	Showing children that you believe education is important is one of the best things you can do. One way to do this is by connecting with your school community – getting to know your child's teacher and other families, attending events or volunteering at school, or taking part in school committees.

“I think of it as a triangle – the student, the school and the parents/family. The child has the daily interaction with the school and we have daily interaction with the child, but it’s about keeping the lines of communication open between the school and the parents.”

(ACT Parent)

Am I doing enough?

Many parents feel that they should be doing more at school. For parents who are busy, it is important to remember that supporting your children’s learning at home matters. Teaching your child new things, reading together and supporting their interests makes a big difference. You don’t need to be an expert – supporting and encouraging learning is enough.

Of course, every child and situation is different so maintaining a flexible attitude is important. Children need to develop independence and expectations that are too high can create stress. Like you, schools want your child to be the best that they can be. But putting pressure on schools can reduce teachers’ abilities to meet the needs of all students. Good communication with your child’s school will help you to support your child, and help the school to support your child too.

What do ACT parents have to say?

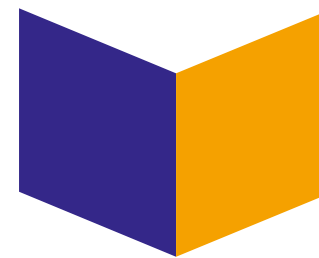
“... one thing I used to do a lot was I always took my kids shopping with me and they thought it was fun, we practiced maths and they took turns on who got to order the cold meat ... ‘I want a quarter of a kilo, how many grams do you need to ask for?’ And that sort of thing.”

“Just being interested in what your child is interested in – so when they show an interest in something, encouraging it, giving them opportunities to learn more, and try it and experiment. I think that’s really important.”

“It’s also about encouraging them to have the right relationship with their teachers, for example. Being able to give proper attention to teachers, and having the right attitude to all that.”

“We’ve found it’s just hard working full-time but I’m fortunate the school do make time available and it’s just over the telephone and internet.”

“You’ve got to think outside the box a little bit with trying to stay in touch with the teacher, but I think it’s important to be working as a team with the teacher. It’s not just their job.”



Where can I find more information?

Parent involvement toolkit – Information on parental engagement and family-school partnerships

www.peopleforeducation.ca/how-does-education-work/training-and-resources/helping-children-succeed-the-parent-engagement-toolkit/

Raising children – Ideas for learning and play with primary school aged children

http://raisingchildren.net.au/play_learning/school_age_play_learning.html

Schoolatoz: Practical help for parents – A comprehensive guide for parents of school aged children

www.schoolatoz.nsw.edu.au/

Our Partners

The ACT Education and Training Directorate partnered with the non-profit Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), The Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, the Catholic School Parents Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn and the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools. Together, the alliance developed a shared understanding of parental engagement in the ACT, based on what the evidence shows has the biggest impact and the things that matter most to ACT families and schools. The international evidence has been reviewed and parents and teachers have been consulted on what is important to them.

More resources will be available in 2015.



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