

# Key dimensions

## Family-School Partnerships Framework A guide for schools and families

The *Family-School Partnerships Framework* identifies the following seven key dimensions for planning partnership activities.

### **Communicate**

School leaders and teachers build relationships that encourage, facilitate and leverage parent and family engagement in learning through effective communication that:

- is personal, warm, frequent, culturally appropriate and non-judgemental
- builds bridges across cultures, languages and education experiences
- does not assume all families communicate and interpret meaning in the same ways
- is open to family needs and attitudes
- is responsive to and celebrates family input
- utilises multi-directional listening, information and perspective sharing
- recognises parents and families as genuine partners with real influence.

### **Connect learning at home and school**

School staff, parents and families recognise and appreciate the overlaps between home, school and community learning environments, and work collaboratively to:

- understand the benefits of positive parent/family engagement and home-school partnerships
- encourage positive attitudes to learning and education aspirations in all children
- have high and healthy expectations of all children
- draw on the skills and knowledge that children bring from home to school, and from school to home
- ensure families are well informed and understand their children's progress
- ensure teachers partner with parents/families in educational decisions that relate to their children
- share information and ideas to assist children's learning and wellbeing.

### **Build community and identity**

Welcoming and inclusive schools holistically support students to develop their sense of identity, personal competence and belonging. In doing so, they:

- value and draw on school, family and community relationships, cultures and traditions
- support teachers to establish links with their students' family, social and cultural contexts
- connect students with their communities to develop life skills and build social and cultural capital

- connect home, community and cultural contexts to curriculum content
- promote cross-cultural awareness, appreciation and communication capability among school staff and families
- tailor partnership approaches to family and cultural needs and interests
- take a non-judgemental and creative approach in reaching out to all families, particularly those less visible in their children's formal education
- use family and community engagement as a key strategy for school improvement and culture change.

### **Recognise the role of the family**

When school staff, parents and families appreciate their complementary roles in children's learning and schooling, they increase their collective positive influence. In doing so, they:

- clearly communicate school expectations of students and parents/families, and listen to families' expectations of schools
- make it easier for parents and families to understand school goals, curriculum and the social goals of schooling
- assist school leaders and staff to understand family and community needs, expectations and aspirations
- explore and expand teacher and parent/family understandings of the role of families in children's education, including across cultures
- recognise and use learning opportunities in the home environment
- regularly discuss the roles of teachers, families and communities in contemporary approaches to learning
- demonstrate sensitivity to and empathy for family values, attitudes, perspectives and concerns
- develop communication, collaboration, problem solving and conflict resolution skills
- provide information, ideas and training opportunities to build parent and family capacity and confidence to engage and partner in children's learning.

### **Consult on decision making**

Inclusive school decision making generates shared responsibility and school accountability so that schools:

- understand and respect family values, interests, expectations and aspirations
- actively seek and consider opinions of families outside of formal school structures
- develop policies that embed family representation in decision making groups
- ensure families from different social and cultural backgrounds are included in decision making processes and structures
- provide opportunities and resources for parents and families to develop and build the skills, knowledge and confidence to participate and actively contribute in decision making
- ensure transparent decision making processes and timely communication about progress and outcomes.

## Collaborate beyond the school

Community engagement enriches student learning and wellbeing, and expands school and family resources so that schools:

- provide visible school leadership in the community and model a relationship culture in the school community and with partners
- invest time to explore specific student needs and develop shared understanding of pathways to the desired outcomes
- create and participate in partnerships that are mutually beneficial and have clear goals, roles and responsibilities
- ensure school and partner values, and ways of working, are compatible
- establish or co-construct success measures
- maintain flexibility to accommodate challenges and change
- plan and access appropriate and adequate resources
- plan for sustainability and celebration milestones.

## Participate

Families participate in schools in a wide variety of ways and make many valuable contributions. Participation includes involvement in school-based activities, engagement in school-based learning, as well as activities that are not directly related to schooling. It is important to:

- value, recognise and celebrate the contributions families make by volunteering their time, talent, resources and networks
- recognise that family involvement in school events, activities and discussions helps students adjust during key transition periods including from formation to school, primary to middle and high school, and high school to life, work and post-school studies
- create opportunities for parents to feel welcome and comfortable in schools
- create opportunities for parents and families to participate in teaching and learning activities
- encourage parents and families to constructively participate in extra-curricular activities to support their children's interests, and build positive relationships with other families and school staff
- offer learning and training opportunities to parents , and to teachers and parents together, to develop their capacity and confidence to work in partnership.