

# 7 positive parental engagement tips to help kids

*'Family-school and community partnerships are re-defining the boundaries and functions of education. They enlarge parental and community capacity; they create conditions in which children learn more effectively. In these ways they take education beyond the school gates'.\**



The Family-School and Community Partnership Bureau recently commissioned a report into the effects parental engagement on children's educational outcomes. It found that parents who actively engaged with both the school and community to enhance their child's learning experience greatly added to the academic potential of that child.

*"The report underlines the strong role parents have in potentially improving the educational attainment of their children, particularly when in partnership with school learning,"* said Dr Emerson, chief executive officer for ARACY.

## **Tips on how to provide effective parental engagement:**

**1. Give support:** Providing a supportive and stimulating home environment that encourages learning by asking questions and exchanging ideas. Involve the whole family in learning activities, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions, like measuring ingredients when cooking, writing the shopping list, going to art galleries, plays and museums. Make sure they have a dedicated learning space at home and keep a supply of stationary and coloured pens so they can complete homework. Help them to set academic goals each year and know the skills they need to complete tasks in various subjects.

**2. Expect a child to achieve:** Having high expectations for children to achieve academically and in other ways encourages them to do their best. Let the child know that you are proud of them for trying their best, not for coming first in something.

**3. Develop a positive parenting style:** This includes modelling behaviour that shows an interest in learning new things, not being afraid to make mistakes and learn from them and having the discipline to finish difficult tasks before having fun.

**4. Volunteering:** Parents that get involved in school life and community activities are setting an example to children that it is good to be part of something and work with other people. It also sends a signal to children that school is important and a great place to be. Parents can volunteer at school functions such as sports day, reading groups and excursions. They can also attend school plays, events and sporting activities.

**5. Continuity helps:** Give children a little help often and on an ongoing basis. This help will change during their time at school; for primary aged children it is more about being involved in activities at the school during school time like reading groups, sports days and band practice. As they progress to high school it is more about encouraging them academically, knowing who their friends are and what they are up to and supporting their sporting pursuits. The most important thing is that the level of commitment by parents needs to stay the same.



**6. Keep it real and local:** Where possible link school work into current or local events. For example, the recent meteorite that came close to the earth could be a starting point to explore space and planets, at an age appropriate level. Keep an eye out for workshops at the local library or art gallery. Also go to plays put on by local theatrical groups. For younger children you could set up a veggie patch in the back garden and look at the life cycle of a plant and grow healthy food.

**7. Build a bond with the school:** Build a relationship with your child's teachers, one based on trust and mutual respect. Let your child know that you are interested in what the teacher says and what is going on in the classroom. Engagement strategies are more likely to be successful when teachers know how to communicate effectively with parents. Through this mutual understanding and commitment, a child's wellbeing will be enhanced, and they will have a much greater chance of living a life that they value, where their full capacities and aspirations are fulfilled.

Parental engagement in learning outcomes at home can lead to higher grades and test scores, lower drop-out rates, higher education rates and a greater likelihood of children going onto higher education and university. It also has the added bonus of helping to improve school attendance, increase social skills, gives a greater sense of personal achievement and helps children focus and engage in school work.

*\*Muller, D (2009). Parental engagement: Social and economic effects. Prepared for the Australian Parents Council, Available: <http://www.austparents.edu.au/>*

*Writer Helen Splarn. Source: ARACY. QLD Government – Education Views.*