

22 October 2020

Media Release

Schools Research Unique Approaches to Engage Families in Student Learning

Giving parents an online window into their child's maths lessons, developing new ways to connect with parents of disengaged students and those from remote Indigenous communities and enlisting the help of Prep parents in their children's oral language development are among the new approaches being adopted by independent schools to engage and bring families closer to their children's learning.

The completed projects were showcased at a parent engagement breakfast hosted by Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) in Brisbane this week. See school research project stories below.

ISQ Executive Director David Robertson said more than 50 years of research had shown student achievement and wellbeing lifted when parents were not simply involved in their child's school, but actively engaged in supporting their learning.

Mr Robertson said ISQ and the Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QIS Parents Network) worked collaboratively to support positive and respectful partnerships between families and independent schools.

The school-based research projects were funded through ISQ's Research in Schools program with additional funding from the QIS Parents Network.

Breakfast keynote speaker, internationally renowned Canadian academic and author, Dr Linda Kaser shared her research, experience and insights on parent engagement with independent schools at the event.

Dr Kaser, who presented via Zoom from Canada, said many schools around the world had shifted their family engagement practices over the past 10 years – for the better.

"The pandemic has also dramatically increased the use of technology in the teaching and learning processes so more families are having the chance to 'see' their child learn," she said in a [reflection piece for ISQ](#).

"When schools get their engagement with parents right it leads to greater student learning, staff pride in their repertoires and a greater sense of teacher efficacy and you also get trusting relationships that allow you to move forward through good times and bad (for example, fires in the community and global pandemics)."

QIS Parents Network Executive Officer Justine Cirocco said parents - supported and guided by their schools and teachers, who are the experts in student learning - can positively influence their child's educational progress.

"Simple things like asking a child what they learned in class or what learning goal they achieved today and linking that learning to home and family activities or making it a point of discussion during a meal or car ride, can have a positive impact," Ms Cirocco said.

"As Dr Kaser highlights, simply adding the word 'yet' to the end of a sentence about a concept a student may not have mastered 'yet', shows them that learning is continuous and that through perseverance and effort they can achieve."

22 October 2020

Media Release

The QIS Parents Network maintains a central online hub of parent engagement resources and research for all schools and parents on its [website](#). It also provides to independent schools that want to build and enhance how they engage parents in their child's education.

Completed parent engagement school research projects:

[Fairholme College \(Toowoomba\)](#) – the largest and oldest girls' boarding school in Queensland – is well versed in building connections with regional boarding families, but they adopted an entirely different approach to build rapport with the families of their Indigenous boarders from remote communities.

[The Lakes College \(North Lakes\)](#) moved to a new online maths platform for primary students in 2019 that enabled parents to find out in real-time what their children were learning and their progress. However, the school didn't want to just tell their parents to go to the new portal, they also wanted to educate their parents on how to interpret the information and how they could use this knowledge to better engage with their children about what they were learning.

[St John's Anglican College \(Forest Lake\)](#) saw an opportunity to partner with its Kindergarten and Prep parents to reinforce classroom learning at home. They armed parents with simple and targeted "reading bags and talking keys" to help improve the oral language skills of their children and in doing so transformed their parents into some of their most eager students.

Media Contact | Justine Nolan 0428 612 315 | jnolan@isq.qld.edu.au