Independent Schools Queensland
choice & diversity

Engaging parents in their child's learning and wellbeing

CHANGE, CONTINUITY, AND COVID-19

OUR SCHOOLS – OUR FUTURE
ISSUES PAPER
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School Images

St Peter's Lutheran College (cover)
St Andrew's Anglican College
Concordia Lutheran College
The River School
John Paul College
St Margaret's Anglican Girls School
The Southport School

School images are from the learning@home period and are not necessarily aligned with the schools quoted.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Linda is the Program Director, Bachelor of Education, and Senior Lecturer, in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. She is an experienced classroom and tertiary teacher, having taught extensively in the primary and middle years in schools and primary, middle years and senior secondary courses in universities.

Linda has held leadership roles in government and independent schools and was the Program Director of the Master of Teaching (Primary) program at UQ for four years. She completed her PhD on parent-teacher engagement in 2013 and has since led significant research projects examining parent engagement in inquiry curriculum using social media and the role of principals in leading parent engagement in schools.

Linda uses dialogic approaches throughout the design and implementation of her research projects as she works alongside students, parents, teachers, principals, preservice teachers, researchers and industry stakeholders to generate authentic partnerships for enhancing student learning and wellbeing and the success of schools. Her work focuses on how usually marginalised individuals such as parents in schools may be enabled to play more participatory roles as co-educators in their child's learning and wellbeing.

Linda has published widely in the area of parent engagement. She is the National Publications Director of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) and has served on the Bulimba State School Council as an Appointed Member for six years.

Professor Beryl Exley

Beryl is the Deputy Head of School – Learning and Teaching in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. She is an experienced early years and primary years classroom teacher and has taught in urban and remote schools in government and independent schools. She commenced her first full-time university placement in 2001.

Beryl's areas of teaching and research expertise are with socio-cultural approaches to English Curriculum, inquiry curriculum, and new media for learning and teaching. She has a special interest in ensuring the child's and family's life-worlds are represented in and through their schooling experiences.

Beryl has authored more than 100 research publications, many in collaboration with classroom teachers. Beryl has held leadership positions as the immediate-past President of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) and as the chair of the International Development Oceania Committee (IDOC), a sub-committee of the International Literacy Association (ILA). She is currently a board member of Yarranlea School, an ISQ member independent school.

Beryl has been collaborating with Dr Linda Willis on parent engagement research and has actively supported case study teachers to use inquiry as core to disciplinary content and a form of interactive and engaging pedagogy. As part of this research she has examined the use of technology and social media to engage parents and carers in their child's learning and wellbeing.

OUR SCHOOLS – OUR FUTURE

Our Schools – Our Future is an Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) research-based initiative designed to promote informed public policy debate about schooling. Through commissioned and internal research, Our Schools – Our Future explores trends and issues in key areas which determine the nature and performance of our school education systems. While the initiative has a particular focus on the contribution of independent schools to our education provision and outcomes, it examines a range of issues and trends relevant to the development and implementation of effective public policy for schooling. All research reports are available to members on the ISQ website.

DISCLAIMER

Foreword

Parents have always played a pivotal role in their child's education. They are their child's first teachers, nurturing and guiding their development.

More than 50 years of national and international research has proven that children whose parents are engaged in their learning, have better attendance, motivation and self-belief, which leads to improved academic, social and wellbeing outcomes.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced learning to move from the classroom to the dining room for the majority of Queensland students in Term 2 of 2020, many families became engaged in their children's education like never before.

Parents and carers at home or working from home during this period, could see what and how their children learned, and in some cases, played a hands-on role supporting them.

Together, schools and their parents, reimagined new ways to communicate and stay connected. School approaches were informed and influenced by their local circumstances. Examples included virtual parent-teacher interviews, the development of new online community wellbeing hubs and virtual cross-country events involving entire school communities.

In July 2020, two independent schools shared their home learning experiences during a webinar hosted by Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) and the Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QIS Parents Network). The event was facilitated by leading academics in the field of parent engagement, Dr Linda Willis and Professor Beryl Exley from Griffith University.

In this ISQ-commissioned *Our Schools Our Future* issues paper, Dr Willis and Professor Exley draw on the experiences of those schools, other case studies and research findings, to answer the provocation: How does change catalysed by COVID-19 open up opportunities for parent engagement now and in the future?

This paper demonstrates that while there were variabilities in experiences and challenges during the home learning period, there were also many positive outcomes that all schools can learn from and build on to further strengthen parent engagement in their own unique contexts.

We encourage schools to take time to reflect on their engagement with their parent communities during this period and to incorporate these crucial learnings into future strategic planning and reform activities to enhance student learning and wellbeing.

David Robertson

Executive Director
Independent Schools Queensland

Educators in schools are accustomed to managing ever-constant change. The COVID-19 pandemic however precipitated change in schools on a scale and pace not previously encountered. As quarantine measures were imposed, the shift in April 2020 in Queensland, Australia, to learning@home suddenly thrust parents[1] and teachers into new roles without the necessary time and space to otherwise manage this transition. Learning@home denotes how schools provide learning and teaching while closed for a protracted period (Department of Education, 2020). It is unsurprising that many have likened the experience to having to build an aeroplane while already in flight!

From an historian's perspective the idea of change co-exists with the notion of continuity. These concepts may also be thought of as discontinuity and continuity (Gerschenkron, 1962). The Australian Curriculum: History elaborates that, "Change occurs at different rates simultaneously, linking forward and backward in time, whilst continuities define aspects of the past that remain the same over certain periods of time" (ACARA, 2015b). We (authors) take up this understanding of change and continuity in the context of discussing parent engagement and the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular we call on our research in Engaging Parents in Inquiry Curriculum (EPIC), stories of parent engagement success during the learning@home experience shared by schools and parents, and other available information and literature from Australia and overseas, to respond to the provocation: How does change catalysed by COVID-19 open up opportunities for parent engagement now and in the future?

1 In this article, parent, refers to a child's biological parent or grandparent, family, relative, guardian, caregiver, or other person or persons such as Elders in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family or community with primary care and responsibility for creating an environment that supports a child's learning and wellbeing (Baker & Harris, 2020).

What is parent engagement?

Before exploring the idea of change and continuity in the context of parent engagement as a result of COVID-19, it is important to define what we mean by *parent engagement*. The term is often used interchangeably and/or in association with many others including: involvement, participation, communication, partnership, collaboration, cooperation, coordination, and contribution (see also Willis, 2018). Although these various terms reflect many of the ways parent engagement is described, they also signal distinct differences in how parent engagement may be understood philosophically, theoretically, and pedagogically. These differences therefore have important implications for practice and research.

As parents, experienced classroom teachers, teacher educators, and researchers involved in parent engagement projects for more than 15 years, our understanding of what parent engagement means centres on the proposition of student learning and wellbeing. We recognise that parents are a child's first and continuing teachers and that over the course of a lifetime a child's time in school is comparatively short. The word, *engagement*, has a particular meaning. The literal translation of engagement is, "to make a pledge" as derived from en – "to make" and gage – "pledge" (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005, p. 12). The idea of a pledge encompasses, "a moral commitment" (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005, p. 12) and is perhaps best recognised when we think of a couple who agree to marry and become engaged. A further meaning of engagement is "contact by fitting together; …the meshing of gears" (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005, p. 13). Just as gears in the transmission of a car interact with each other to produce motion, engaging parents speaks to a philosophy and pedagogy (see Pushor et al., 2013) in schools and classrooms where teachers and parents work together to enhance student learning and wellbeing. Engaging parents thus challenges historic practices in schools where parents served schools' interests almost exclusively (Pushor, 2001). These so-called *parent involvement* practices have seen parents undertake mostly ancillary school roles (e.g., spectators, volunteers, fundraisers) which channel their energy and resources toward supporting school programs and activities (Lueder, 2000). Parent engagement however, recognises the role of parents as integral and essential to a child's learning and wellbeing; hence, parents simply can't be left out of the educational process!

Our knowledge of practice and research has led us to draw ideas and inspiration from Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) conceptualisation of parent engagement (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Parent involvement-engagement continuum (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014, p. 403)

School agency

	Parental Involvement with Schools	
Parents' Evening	Reading with children	Parental interventions
Parents passive recipients of information	*In school – school directed, "helping teacher"*	*School led, little or no parental involvement in setting up or running*
	Parental involvement with Schooling	
Parents' Evening	Reading with children	Parental interventions
Dialogue between parents and staff	*In school, some parental discretion*	*Jointly planned and led by parents, after consultation*
	Parental Engagement with Children's Learning	
Parents' Evening	Reading with children	Parental interventions
Parent-led discussion of teaching and learning	*Not in school, parent and child led*	*Parent devised and led*

Parental agency

Their framework represents parent involvement and parent engagement as co-existing on a continuum where parent involvement is at one end and parent engagement is at the other. The parent involvement-engagement continuum overcomes persistent and sometimes confusing issues in the literature where the notions of involvement and engagement have been seen (as noted earlier) as either synonymous (parent involvement *is* parent engagement) or binary opposites (parent involvement *versus* parent engagement). Starting from the proposition of student learning and wellbeing, Goodall and Montgomery instead view parent engagement in terms of "a shift in relationships" from those between parents and schools to those between parents and the learning and wellbeing of their child (p. 404). This definition describes a cumulative process which respects the importance of both parent involvement and parent engagement. Goodall (2017) explains that although parent engagement is "more effective", parent involvement is also "good" because parent involvement activities may constitute steps toward engaging parents in their child's learning and wellbeing (p. 91). For example, informal meetings between parents and teachers can lay the foundation of trusting relationships on which future engagement opportunities are built.

Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) framework provides examples of a shift in relationships from parent involvement to parent engagement. A traditional school activity such as parents attending an information evening may be reimagined to parents and teachers dialoguing about aspects of learning and teaching to parents actively leading these discussions. Goodall (2017) elaborates on these ideas by describing three levels:

- parent involvement with the *school* (e.g., parents' evenings, volunteering in school, reading in class);
- parent involvement with *schooling* (e.g., keeping track of coursework, helping with homework); and
- parent engagement with *learning* (e.g., attitude toward learning in the home, model, guide, moral support for learning). (p. 93)

For each new level the balance shifts along the continuum toward parent engagement while parents experience corresponding increased agency for contributing to their child's learning and wellbeing.

Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) conceptualisation of parent engagement is aspirational. They recognise the issue of engaging parents is complex and takes innumerable forms. Despite the existence of many different parent engagement programs and initiatives, little is known about the subtleties of influence (Jeynes, 2012). Through our EPIC research we have seen school leaders embrace the idea of parent engagement, only to encounter significant barriers (e.g., cultural and linguistic differences between parents and teachers) in practice. Meaningful change has occurred in some schools – and in some areas of parent engagement – but not others. To help us understand change and continuity in the context of our parent engagement work we have further conceptualised Goodall and Montgomery's parent involvement-engagement continuum to include a focus on *dialogic processes* for achieving parent engagement drawn from research (e.g., Mapp et al., 2017). Words to conceptualise these processes include relational, inclusive, interactive, supportive, innovative, and collaborative. Our expanded view of Goodall and Montgomery's parent involvement-engagement continuum increases possibilities for understanding and explaining what worked well during the COVID-19 learning@home experience and what post-pandemic opportunities for engaging parents now exist.

Why parent engagement?

Having established our understanding of what parent engagement means, we present three key arguments for the imperative of engaging parents. First, parents and teachers ostensibly want the same things for their children/students. More than a decade ago, Holmes (2009), reporting on Australian research for the *Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau*, wrote about parents:

> They want their children to be decent human beings, people who are tolerant, and who can relate effectively to a wide range of their fellow citizens. Parents hope for a strong sense of personal agency in their child, as someone who has developed their abilities and skills, and possesses the dispositions – including a love of learning – that will enable them to pursue their life choices (p. 3).

Similar sentiments are encapsulated in the recently renewed vision for Australia's education system in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* that, "encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be" so they can become "confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community" (Department of Education, 2019, pp. 2 & 4). Achieving this vision relies on schools and teachers:

- ensuring "young Australians of all backgrounds are supported to achieve their full educational potential";
- developing students' "sense of self-worth, self-awareness, and personal identity";
- developing their "personal values and attributes such as honesty, empathy, loyalty, responsibility and respect for others";
- preparing them "for their potential life roles as friends, family, community and workforce members"; and
- instilling in them "the confidence and capability to pursue learning throughout life". (Department of Education, 2019, pp. 5 & 6)

Parents and teachers share similar hopes and goals for each child/student in their care. Parent engagement is therefore not only in each child's/student's best interests, but also those of parents and teachers who will reap clear rewards from working together to pursue their mutual aspirations and desired outcomes.

Second, international and national research evidence over the last half century has consistently shown that parent engagement benefits student learning and wellbeing (e.g., Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth [ARACY], 2015; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; Deforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2011; Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development [OECD], 2017). These benefits include: higher academic outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Goodall, 2017; Jeynes, 2012; Wilder, 2014); enhanced wellbeing (OECD, 2017; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014); increased confidence, motivation, and engagement in learning (Exley & Luke, 2010; Fan et al., 2012; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005); improved school attendance (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004); more positive attitudes about school and improved behaviour (Henderson & Mapp, 2002); and continued school enrolment and higher likelihood of graduation (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Zaff et al., 2017). These benefits are significant not only for individuals and their families in terms of a child's success at school and throughout life, but also considered vital societally to create cohesive communities and ensure sustained national economic prosperity (Department of Education, 2019).



Third, the cumulative weight of evidence in support of parent engagement has driven education reform agendas and initiatives by national governments overseas and in Australia. Examples of these in the United States include the: *No Child Left Behind Act 2001, 2002* and *Every Student Succeeds Act 2015* (United States Department of Education, 2018). Examples from the United Kingdom are: *The Children's Plan* (Department for Education, 2007) and *The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults* (Field, 2010). Australian examples include key national education policy documents such as the, *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Department of Education, 2019), and its antecedent the, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs, 2008).

Further testament to the imperative of parent engagement in Australia are: other significant policy documents (e.g., *The National School Reform Agreement 2019-23 Bilateral Agreement* between the Commonwealth and each state and territory government [Department of Education, Skills & Employment, 2018]); notable research projects (e.g., *Parental Engagement in Learning and Schooling: Lessons from Research* [Emerson et al., 2012]); Commonwealth and state and territory government parent and family engagement frameworks (e.g., *Family-School Partnerships Framework* [Department of Education, Skills & Employment, 2020]); and Australian government-commissioned implementation programs (e.g., *Parent and Family Engagement: An Implementation Guide for School Communities* [Barker & Harris, 2020]).

It is not surprising therefore that the idea of parent engagement receives considerable emphasis in Australian schools and classrooms and in the preparation of graduate teachers. This emphasis is evidenced in the: *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (Professional Practice 5) (Australian Institute for Teaching & School Leadership [AITSL] (2017a); *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (Standards 3.7, 5.5, & 7.3) (AITSL, 2017b); *National School Improvement Tool* (Domains 3 & 9) (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2016); and *Initial Teacher Education Program Standards and Procedures* (AITSL, 2019).

The shared goals of parents and teachers, consistent findings from international and local research, and the increased prominence of parent engagement in Australian policy, research, and practice have meant all school sectors – independent, government, and Catholic – now consider parent engagement a priority to improve schools and learning and wellbeing outcomes for all students.

Barriers to parent engagement

Yet, despite overwhelming support philosophically and theoretically for parent engagement, families and schools report variable uptake of this agenda.

Our EPIC research uncovered various barriers. EPIC is an acronym for *Engaging Parents in Inquiry Curriculum* and is the umbrella term we use to describe our research. EPIC seeks to engage parents in their child's learning and wellbeing by encouraging collaboration among teachers and school communities, inquiry curriculum approaches, and the use of social media (see Exley & Willis, 2016; Exley et al., 2017; Willis & Exley, 2018; Willis, Exley, & Clancy, 2020). The common barriers for parents and teachers were: time constraints; differences in education backgrounds; cultural, language, and linguistic differences (e.g., parents' discomfort with writing in English in public places); past school experiences which did not encourage parent engagement; and different expectations in roles and responsibilities. Specific barriers identified by parents included: perceived lack of teacher approachability; wide variations in school/teacher practices (e.g., frequency and kind of communication which may only focus on a child's poor behaviour); diminished sense of confidence for guiding their child's learning at home; and the disincentive of mandatory screening and/or training for those who may wish to become classroom volunteers. For teachers, we found parent engagement barriers included: perceived unwillingness by some parents to participate; technical challenges (e.g., parents' access to internet-supported devices; loss of passwords); lack of suitable digital platforms with secure data storage and/or the facility to support two-way exchange between home and school; and the values and beliefs of parents of particular cultural groups (e.g., high respect for teachers as the professional experts).

Many of these barriers feature commonly in the literature (e.g., Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Goodall, 2016; Lewin & Luckin, 2010; Williams & Sánchez, 2013; Willis & Exley, 2018). According to Goodall (2018) however, too often barriers to parent engagement signal the stabilising influence of past experience. She argues the perpetuation of conventional ways of operating in schools lies with the "hegemonic belief" where: "In essence, society, or rather, the people who make up a given society, have become convinced that the status quo is just the 'way things should be'… 'rather than being seen as elements of a system amenable to change'" (Goodall, 2018, p. 1613). Various barriers to parent engagement therefore continue to inhibit schools and parents working together to shift the balance on the parent involvement-engagement continuum further toward engagement.

The urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic created a unique set of circumstances which opened up opportunities for schools and teachers to engage parents in their child's learning and wellbeing like never before. At the time of writing, the pandemic continues to disrupt life in Australia and worldwide. We therefore acknowledge that the challenges and implications educationally for families and schools will vary significantly and cannot yet be fully appreciated. Our focus in this article is on what we might learn from stories of apparent parent engagement success to date which have emerged locally and overseas during the health emergency (e.g., Willis et al., 2020). To aid our learning we draw on specific examples from Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) and the Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QISPN) during the learning@home experience from 17 April to 25 May 2020. We take C-H-A-N-G-E as an acronym to discuss common themes from what principals, school leaders, teachers, and parents have shared was possible, positive, and successful in parent engagement during this window of time. Simultaneously, we draw on what we know and understand from our EPIC and other research to further describe and explain what we've heard and learnt. In the final section, we draw conclusions and implications about the challenges and opportunities ahead.

How was parent engagement achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic?

To explore how successful parent engagement might be achieved, this section discusses six interrelated and mutually reinforcing aspects of C-H-A-N-G-E during the pandemic under the headings: Connections, Home-school alignment, Agency, New and different roles for parents, Generative collaboration among teachers, and Empathy.

Connections

During the learning@home period teachers and parents reported that home-school relationships strengthened. This change seems counterintuitive because most families were physically isolated throughout this time meaning conventional human contact was not possible. The need to use digital technologies to bridge the home-school divide was clear. Yet, their use by schools as a parent engagement strategy is not new. Over the last two decades schools have increasingly abandoned paper-based communication in favour of various digital platforms and channels (e.g., school website, email, Facebook, and bulk short message service) to disseminate newsletters, information, and announcements to parents. The necessity of the learning@home moment forged connections between homes and schools in distinctly different ways than usual.

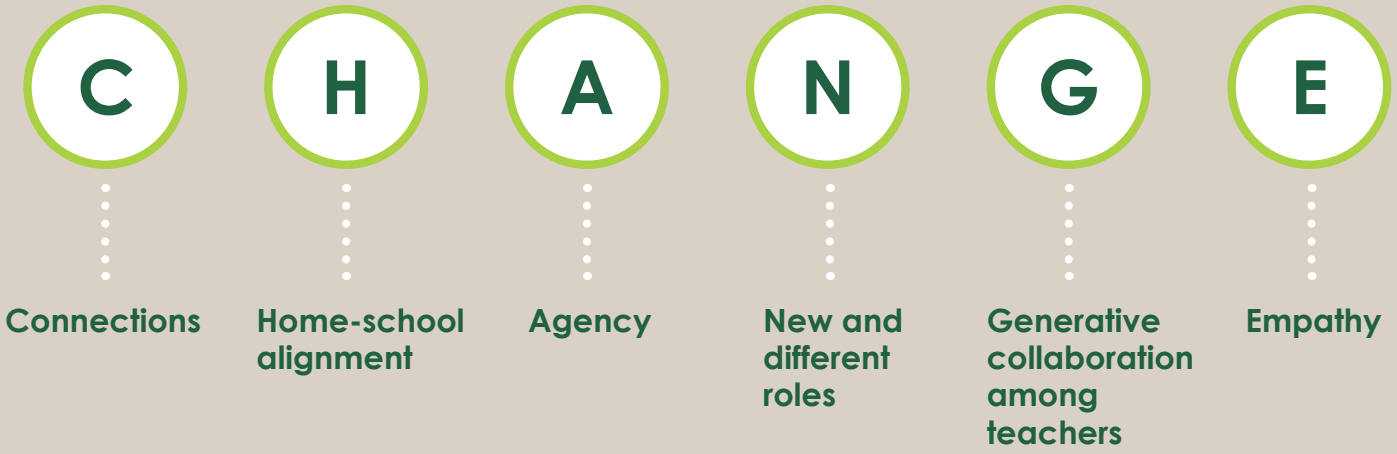
These differences appear connected to the *quality* of communication that was achieved during the learning@home experience. The principal of The River School (Pre-kindy to Year 6) at the Sunshine Coast in Queensland commented that, "Good communication between school and home is something the school has always prided itself on, but… information sharing strengthened during home learning thanks to weekly ZOOM catch-ups between teachers and parents and more regular emails" (QISPN, 2020b).

A parent from St Andrew's Anglican College (Kindy to Year 12) at the Sunshine Coast in Queensland described communication lines between parents and teachers during the learning@home period as "always open", declaring that "parents were 'never left in the dark'" (ISQ et al., 2020b). Similarly, one school leader at Toowoomba's Concordia Lutheran College (Prep to Year 12) in Queensland noted:

> We've gone from a very formal environment of parent-school interactions to one that's less formal. I have parents who will now email and say, 'Can I please have a ZOOM or a Teams meeting?' That's something that wouldn't have happened in the past. (ISQ et al., 2020a)

These examples mirror our EPIC research findings which showed that teachers' use of personal emails and phone calls, online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, and mobile apps such as Seesaw for early years students enhanced parent engagement because they could connect more easily, directly and frequently with students and parents (Willis & Exley, 2018). These findings support international research which showed possibilities for engaging parents increased because online technology: improved the timeliness of communication (Grant, 2011); created more opportunities for parent-teacher interactions (Schwartz, 2017); encouraged parents and teachers to freely initiate contact (Quan & Dolmage, 2006); and offered parents and teachers ways to *stay* connected (Reem, 2016). Simultaneously, these possibilities have been linked to: more meaningful home-school connections (Walsh et al., 2014); improved student-parent-teacher relationships (Bouffard, 2008); enhanced student learning opportunities (Somekh et al., 2001); and increased confidence in parents for assisting their child to learn (Olmstead, 2013).

There were vast differences in experiences for schools and families during the learning@home period. Disadvantaged



students' education is thought to have suffered the most with the pandemic exposing inequities of access to technology which no doubt compounded the effects of the disruption for these and many other students (Sacks et al., 2020). The event is significant for parent engagement because it created *en masse* a context in which the *purpose* of connecting home and school was clearly focused on closing the gap between parents and their child's learning and wellbeing (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Our discussion shows the importance of different digital technologies in this quest for positive connections while also highlighting the need to select and use those which encourage relational, responsive, reciprocal, and supportive processes. How this knowledge might insightfully facilitate parent engagement to benefit all students in the future poses important considerations for schools and parents.

Home-school alignment

Building on the previous section, we use, *home-school alignment*, to refer to changes during the learning@home period which saw student learning at home and school become more aligned than might ordinarily be the case. This increased alignment was possible because parents gained more knowledge and understanding of their child's learning in the school context while teachers gained more knowledge and understanding of each student's learning in their home context. Speaking about students and parents, a school leader from Concordia Lutheran College explained, "We were in their homes and they were in our classrooms" (ISQ et al., 2020a). She elaborated, "During the home learning period we may have been on a Teams meeting with a student and their parent may have been in the room and could lean in to see us interacting or to ask a question" (ISQ et al., 2020a). Referring to secondary school parents, the principal at St Andrew's Anglican College observed that for some parents the experience of watching their child actually learning "reversed perceptions they may have held about their… application to their school work" (ISQ et al., 2020b). In addition, he said the learning system used by the school "enabled parents to jump on and check in to see the work students were set which gave them the chance to ask their children specific questions about different subjects and areas of study" (ISQ et al., 2020b). He concluded, "There was greater visibility of learning" (ISQ et al., 2020b).

Increased home-school alignment was also achieved because more flexible learning was possible during the learning@home period. One Concordia Lutheran College teacher observed, "Online learning… allowed students and families freedom to choose when they worked, which subject areas they wanted to engage in first, all while embracing the ability to re-watch lesson content if they desired" (ISQ et al., 2020a). The principal at Brisbane's St Peters Lutheran College (Prep to Year 12) who conducted parent focus groups about learning during lockdown reported that primary school parents commonly said, "… their children liked the flexibility of the home learning day, in that they could work at their own pace and dive deeper into things they were passionate about" (QISPN, 2020a).

In our EPIC research we found teachers used strategies such as email to increase visibility for parents of their child's learning by letting them know what they were doing in a specific area and suggesting ways they could be involved at home. Parents indicated these strategies helped them engage in discussions with their child in more informed ways and to contribute to their learning by sending in objects or photos as they felt they knew more about what was happening in the classroom. Teachers reported conversations at home flowed back into the classroom and artefacts children

brought in generated further opportunities for discussion and deeper learning (Willis & Exley, 2018). The literature also highlights how strategies such as email not only allow "the asynchronous exchange of information… but also offer users the opportunity to share pictures and videos, or engage in face-to-face, real-time communication (such as FaceTime and Skype)" (Goodall, 2016, p. 123). These strategies also increase flexibility by "allowing parents and schools to communicate at times which are convenient to both (particularly asynchronous methods) and to send and store information easily and quickly" (Ho et al. in Goodall, 2016, p. 123). Ho et al. (2013) emphasised that teachers should use these strategies more as they afford "parents more opportunities to understand what their children do in school" (p. 106) and thus increase possibilities for engaging them in their child's learning and wellbeing.

The learning@home experience enabled greater home-school alignment through increased visibility of and flexibility in learning and teaching. This alignment enhanced parents' and teachers' knowledge and insights about learning at home/school and importantly about their child/student as a learner in these different contexts. Our discussion highlights the value of inclusive processes for shifting the metaphorical balance more toward engagement on the parent involvement-engagement continuum (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). It also calls on schools and families to use the knowledge and skills gained during the learning@home experience to innovatively exploit existing and new forms of communication to align home and school learning to benefit all students going forward.

Agency

Student and parent agency increased during the learning@home period. Put simply, agency refers to an individual's or group's "ability to make things happen" (Willis & Exley, 2018, p. 91). Agency is linked to a person's access to resources – material (e.g., curriculum documents) and human (e.g., knowledge, attributes, dispositions) – in their different contexts (Willis & Exley, 2018). Although student agency is not commonly recognised in the context of parent engagement (Grant, 2011), evidence of its impact on student learning and wellbeing emerged from the learning@home experience in comments by principals and parents. As students returned to school, The River School's principal reflected on changes in students saying, "We have all been through the biggest transition… but we have been surprised at how successful it has been and especially how resilient the children have been" (QISPN, 2020b). St Peters Lutheran College principal who gathered feedback from parents after lockdown restrictions were lifted concluded from listening to them that, "… children of all ages were observed to grow in independence" (QISPN, 2020a). Similarly, one parent at St Andrew's Anglican College said a direct result of the experience was that her Year 9 son became "a more independent, motivated learner" who had "learnt resilience and patience" (ISQ et al., 2020b).

Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) model of parent engagement reminds us that as the relationship between parents and their child's learning and wellbeing shifts closer to engagement on the involvement-engagement continuum, parent agency increases. During the learning@home period, parents (like teachers and students) gained new knowledge and skills. The principal at St Andrew's Anglican College noted, "… parents who were not adept at using the school's online learning portals and platforms were forced to familiarise themselves with the technology quickly" (ISQ et al., 2020b). The River School's principal, commenting on the success of new "parent portals" on their website for online lessons, reasoned that, "Parents know how to use them now, so we'll keep it going" (QISPN, 2020b). She enumerated, "[These] are going to be really beneficial" for uploading newsletters, posting weekly timetables, and adding work and projects (QISPN, 2020b). Earlier examples in this article where parents initiated conversations with teachers, asked their child questions about their learning, and changed perceptions of their child as a learner also speak to enhanced resources which increased their agency during the learning@home experience.

Our EPIC research in which teachers engaged parents using inquiry curriculum and social media through mobile apps such as Seesaw showed these approaches positively influenced student and parent agency (Willis & Exley, 2018). Posts on Seesaw by parents provided teachers with resources to create shared conversations with their child which subsequently encouraged student confidence and ability to participate in learning during class and group work (Willis & Exley, 2018). In addition, "student *perceptions* of their parents' presence in the classroom provided further resources which motivated them" to engage more in their learning (Willis & Exley, 2018, p. 99). Teachers thus indicated that students became more engaged because they knew their parents were engaged; in other words, student and parent agency were interrelated.

This relationship is also established in the literature. Referring to student agency, Grant (2011) observed that, "The role of children themselves in parental engagement and the home-school relationship is important… with children themselves one of the most significant factors explaining the extent of parents' involvement in schools" (p. 293). Referring to parent agency, Goodall (2016) concluded that parents' engagement in their child's learning and development toward independence "rests on their own belief in their ability to affect change" (p. 121). Although not speaking about the COVID-19 learning@home experience, Olmstead's (2013) words below are salient for highlighting how connections between student and parent agency may have enhanced parent engagement during this time. She wrote:

> When teachers take actions to cultivate instructional partnerships with parents, those parents are more likely to support their children's learning at home, and the students of these parents are more likely to be perceived by the teachers as positively involved in classroom learning activities. (Olmstead, 2013, p. 29)

The crisis of the pandemic saw parent engagement take "centre stage" (Costantino, 2020). Yet, under the most difficult circumstances, many ISQ and other schools (e.g., Willis et al., 2020) reported a strengthened relationship between parents and their child's learning and wellbeing (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Above we identified positive changes observed in student learning (e.g., boosted independence, increased motivation) and wellbeing (e.g., more adaptability, heightened resilience). Positive changes in parent knowledge, skills and attitudes toward their child's learning were also observed. These changes reinforce previous research (e.g., Willis & Exley, 2018) which suggests student and parent agency – and their interrelationship – play a critical role in the learning and wellbeing proposition. Unfortunately, this role is often overlooked (see Grant, 2011). The learning@home experience demonstrated the importance of purposefully providing resources and creating opportunities to enhance student and parent agency. The question may be asked: What more might be achieved in student learning and wellbeing if, by *design*, rather than through upheaval, future learning and teaching included a stronger, more careful, and deliberate focus on this aspect of parent engagement?

New and different roles for parents

During the learning@home experience many parents indicated they played new and different roles in their child's learning and wellbeing than previously. In a webinar of ISQ schools during which participants reflected on this time, one Concordia Lutheran College parent pronounced, "We (parents) have an active role to play" (ISQ et al., 2020c). His realisation was echoed by parents at other schools who said they became more aware of what they can do at home to enhance their child's learning and wellbeing (e.g., Willis et al., 2020). Parents found they could more easily turn everyday activities into learning opportunities (e.g., including their child in conversations about literacy and numeracy when preparing family meals) (Willis et al., 2020) and prioritised time "to reconnect and build their relationships with their children" (e.g., walking or surfing together) (ISQ et al., 2020b).

The idea of parents playing new and different roles features strongly in our EPIC research. In a Year 3 inquiry curriculum project at Sunnyview School[2] to investigate what makes a hero, Lily (parent) explained that her engagement increased because, "We're (students, parents, teachers) all part of one thing together" (Parent Interview, 2019). Speaking about her son, Lily described how the hero project allowed her to see the way inquiry topics "actually fire in his brain" (Parent Interview, 2019). This resulted in the family "doing different things at home, like building solar systems and doing lots of different [open-ended] science-based projects" (Parent Interview, 2019). Being part of EPIC afforded her more opportunities to be part of *what* her son was learning as well as see *how* he learnt. She said the experience ultimately encouraged her to use "critical thinking" in different aspects of his school and home learning than she might usually (Parent Interview, 2019). Without EPIC, Lily concluded she would "never have known" what to try or how to go about it (Parent Interview, 2019).

Calling on the existing literature (e.g., Olmstead, 2013; Zieger & Tan, 2012), Patrikakou (2016) identified the value of effective communication strategies (e.g., school websites) for apprising parents of their child's progress and improving supportive parent-child relationships. She noted that although any strategies used (e.g., choice of technology) should not alienate families, "having access to textbooks and other learning materials can further increase parent involvement at home and enhance modelling of healthy homework habits" (Patrikakou, 2016, p. 16). She suggested such access, "may also prompt parents to reach out to teachers more frequently because, by being continuously informed, they feel more involved in their child's education" (Patrikakou, 2016, p. 16).

When a middle primary classroom teacher at Bushland State School (pseudonym) invited parents into the planning phase of an inquiry science project about micro-organisms, one parent used his connections to source some manual microscopes and worked with the students to calibrate them for classroom use (Exley & Luke, 2010). The same parent answered students' questions about micro-organisms in creek water on the class discussion board outside of school hours (Ridgewell & Exley, 2011). In the same project, another parent with an interest in computer animation software supported the students to use the software to present their project findings. He made some visits to the classroom as well as answered students' higher-end questions on the class discussion board (Ridgewell & Exley, 2011). Interest in the project grew and another parent who was a nurse responded to student questions about micro-organisms in human biology (Ridgewell & Exley, 2011). The project celebration event took place one evening and was a sell out; every student had a parent, carer or family member in attendance (Exley & Luke, 2010). After this project and another science inquiry project were completed, the Departmental parent and student surveys showed a significant upward trend about parents' and students' satisfaction with the school's approach to curriculum, teaching, and assessment (Ridgewell & Exley, 2011).

2 Pseudonyms are used for names of schools and people in the 2019 EPIC projects.

Liao et al. (2017) investigated parent engagement in a bring-your-own-device school. Like Patrikakou (2016), they recognised the value of strategies such as the use of digital technology to facilitate effective parent-teacher communication. Their research encouraged "bidirectional endeavours between school and parents" by providing parents information about activities in which they could also participate with their child and creating online communities to facilitate parent-school interaction and understanding (Liao et al., 2017, p. 121). Liao et al.'s (2017) findings showed, "the potential for changing parents' roles of caring about their children" (p. 121). As with Lily and her son in our EPIC research, they found that, "some parents and their children may talk about not only how well they learn, but also what they want to learn and how they learn" (Liao et al., 2017, p. 121). They concluded, "In other words, parents are no longer in a passive role; instead, they are empowered to take appropriate actions such as encouraging or assisting in children's learning just in time" (Liao et al., 2017, p. 121).

The learning@home period meant students, parents, and teachers were "all part of one thing together". The similar experiences they shared gave increased impetus to the use of collective processes – particularly by schools. Examples of these in practice included: upskilling school communities in the use of online platforms; more flexible delivery of curriculum content; continuous two-way information sharing; access to a wider range of educational activities and wellbeing resources; and including parents in student learning and wellbeing activities (see ISQ et al., 2020a, 2020b). These changes in the usual ways of operating expanded parent agency for playing more active roles in their child's curriculum learning and wellbeing; hence, shifting them toward engagement on the parent involvement-engagement continuum (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). As this discussion shows, new and different roles for parents, wasn't about their *professionalisation* (i.e., schools monitoring parents to monitor students [van den Berg & van Reekum, 2011]). Rather, if we recall the comparison between the learning@home experience and building an aeroplane while already airborne, then parents' roles were less like passive passengers and more like co-pilots with teachers/schools learning to fly together.

Generative collaboration among teachers

The challenge of engaging parents in their child's learning and wellbeing during the pandemic created the conditions for generative collaboration among teachers to emerge organically and spontaneously. We use the term, generative collaboration (cogeneration), to describe what happens when teachers enter into interactive social spaces (physical and/or virtual) to enhance their professional learning opportunities through the production and/or creation of new knowledge and practices (Willis, 2016). What distinguishes generative collaboration from *tick-box forms* of professional learning is the ongoing exchange of information and ideas teachers are afforded in these spaces through regular rich conversations about aspects of learning and teaching (Willis, 2016). The processes and outcomes that flow are usually not possible for one teacher to achieve working alone (Willis, 2016; Willis et al., 2018).

An example of cogenerative collaboration from a Concordia Lutheran College leader is typical of parent engagement success stories we heard during this time. When asked in an ISQ webinar about differences in teacher collaboration, she replied:

> We noticed it (collaboration) within subjects and outside subjects where all of a sudden we had groups that just sprouted up where [people said]: 'I figured this technology out; I'm happy to show others how to do it' and we had weekly emails going by to support each other where people said, 'Oh, I found this cute little thing' or tips and tricks. (ISQ et al., 2020c)

She explained that these exchanges were, "something you wouldn't normally see because people are very private about their teaching space"; however, during lockdown, "no one was that private; they were all about learning from each other and getting opinions and sound-boarding" (ISQ et al., 2020c). She elaborated:

> Also our relationships with staff [have changed] because we sit in small staffrooms scattered across the school; we don't have one big staffroom so we were connecting with everybody and not just our little group and also it changed what we did in the class and how we're collaborating with our teaching partners in our curriculum… It just opened our eyes about how we can collaborate with our staff. (ISQ et al., 2020c)

In our EPIC research we have created opportunities for generative collaboration among teachers through scheduled dialogues about engaging parents in student inquiry projects that include social media. Although not a rapid response to an unfolding crisis, our findings about the value of cogenerative dialogues are similar to stories from schools such as Concordia. One early career teacher at Sunnyview School commented about how these dialogues improved her professional learning and practice:

> I think my ideas changed because we actually had time to sit down as staff and discuss different and new ways that perhaps we hadn't thought of or thought maybe that wouldn't work. And then doing those things and trying new things, we actually got to find out there was lots of other things that we could be doing. (Robyn, Teacher Interview, 2019)

An experienced early years teacher at Oceantide School who dialogued cogeneratively with two secondary teachers about how to embed technology in her inquiry project for

students and parents declared she was "at an absolute loss in the beginning" (Antoinette, Teacher Interview, 2019). After working with the secondary teachers however, she said they "were able to say, 'Hey, why don't you give this a go?'.... It (referring to Microsoft Teams) lends itself really well to young children if you use it well" (Antoinette, Teacher Interview, 2019). Reflecting on the process, Antoinette said: "It's not about having a conversation. It's about thinking about things differently and challenging your perspective on what you thought might happen within your learning environment" (Teacher Interview, 2019).

Other available evidence on teachers' work across the world during the pandemic indicates they "are actively collaborating with one another and at a local level" (Petrie et al., 2020, p. 14). Doucet et al. showed, "There are unparalleled opportunities for cooperation, creative solutions, and willingness to learn from others and try new tools…" (in Petrie et al., 2020, p. 14). In a survey of more than 10,000 New South Wales teachers, "more collaboration" and "upskilling in digital and online education" were similarly identified as *upsides* during the COVID-19 education disruption (Wilson & Mude, 2020).

Although going into lockdown exacerbated teachers' already heavy workloads, Norman (2020) found not all experiences were negative. His research at a Sydney school highlighted the value of professional learning communities during the rapid shift to learning@home. Norman (2020) described how:

> …the school scheduled an impromptu staff development day focused entirely on delivering learning remotely. Colleagues ran sessions on platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Faculty members headed to different classrooms to practise running Zoom lessons with each other. The New South Wales Department of Education also facilitated a *virtual staff room* on Teams, and many teachers reported the value in sharing ideas with their colleagues both within the school and further afield.

Norman (2020) concluded the benefits of this response were achieved because a consistent, proactive, year-round approach to teacher professional learning already existed.

Whether schools were further along Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) metaphoric parent involvement-engagement continuum when the pandemic broke or only beginning their journey, the need for teachers and school leaders to enable parent engagement in their child's learning and wellbeing suddenly became an urgent focus. What we noticed during the learning@home experience was that necessary changes in the use of time and space in schools opened up unprecedented opportunities for different teachers to come together to: share information, create innovative solutions, deprivatise practices, co-plan the curriculum, and experiment with new online platforms and channels. These changed structures encouraged generative collaboration through collective, supportive, innovative processes which benefited parent engagement while simultaneously fostered positive staff relationships and professional learning for teachers. Quarantining time and space for collective collaboration among teachers so achievements in parent engagement during the learning@home experience can continue and expand must surely be an important consideration for schools going forward.

Empathy

Empathy as an aspect of C-H-A-N-G-E featured strongly in stories of parent engagement success from schools during the learning@home experience. Simply put, empathy is "a capacity to mentally walk in the shoes of other people" (Gilbert et al., 2020, p. 257). It is a "powerful emotion" because it can encourage people's understanding and recognition of diversity in the beliefs, values and practices of others – not only in the past, but also in their own lives and the world more broadly (Gilbert et al., 2020, p. 257). The principal of St Peters Lutheran College observed of the learning@home period that, "Increased empathy between all parties – parents, teachers and students – was one of its best outcomes" (QISPN, 2020a). He expanded, "It enhanced the teacher-student relationship in that kids saw teachers in a different light and teachers saw students in a different light" (QISPN, 2020a). Concordia Lutheran College principal also commented that, "many parents have a newfound respect for the role, expertise and efforts of their child's teachers because they witnessed teaching firsthand" (ISQ et al., 2020a).

Increased empathy among students, parents, and teachers during the learning@home period also showed in the different ways schools prioritised family – not just student – wellbeing. Feedback from parents at Concordia Lutheran College indicated that, "[They] appreciated the school's communication, live classes, online materials and weekly check-ins by staff on student and family wellbeing" (ISQ et al., 2020a). The principal reported that support, "also included a weekly wellbeing newsletter containing recipe ideas, recommended music, videos, activities and game ideas" (ISQ et al., 2020a). A parent at St Andrew's Anglican College relayed how, "During this time a mentor was provided to both my son and our family where a teacher rang us to check not only on my son's welfare, but ours as well" (ISQ et al., 2020b). By the same token, this time saw parents focus more on teacher wellbeing. The principal of Concordia Lutheran College described how, "Parents made morning teas for teachers and [went] out of their way to praise staff for the hard work they put in" (ISQ et al., 2020a).

Increased empathy among all parties may also have accounted for higher levels of personalised support for students. The principal of St Andrew's found that during lockdown staff, "got to know students more" especially those "who just fly under the radar" because "we made personal

contact with them once a week [and] got to hear from them in a different context" (ISQ et al., 2020b). He commented that this was the "reverse" of what he thought might happen, saying instead, "we actually got to know our kids to chat, share and ask questions…. parents felt connected, students felt connected" (ISQ et al., 2020b). The principal of St Peters Lutheran College noted similarly, "Some students who struggled in traditional classroom settings flourished and thrived which was a really positive experience from home learning" (QISPN, 2020a).

The teachers involved in our EPIC research indicated that their students' inquiry projects helped them understand parents more. One early-career teacher commented that, "This year has really changed my perspective on how and when to talk to parents. I feel like it's made me realise that parents *do* like talking to teachers…" (Robyn, Teacher Interview, 2019). She indicated that having a common focus with parents on their child's inquiry project, "helped [her] connect with a lot of parents on a more personal level as well as a professional level" (Robyn, Teacher Interview, 2019).

Although the topic of student wellbeing has gained more prominence in the literature with schools increasingly addressing challenges such as bullying and student mental health (Renton & Stobbe, 2020), connecting the idea of parent engagement and student wellbeing is mostly nascent. At the start of the pandemic, Goodall (2020) wrote about supporting the home environment that, "We've known this for more than 20 years, but now more than ever we need to support parents to support learning". She explained, "Parental engagement with learning is about parents' interests in learning – it's about showing young people that learning is important to all members of the family" (Goodall, 2020). In their report on quality education during COVID-19, Petrie et al. (2020) also declared, "And as important as continuing quality education is, it is just as important to maintain mental and physical wellbeing for students and parents" (p. 22). Their statement was consistent with quantitative data from Australian parents and educators collected earlier this year about the future of schools which showed, "Support for curriculum and wellbeing [was] not either/or, but both" (Renton & Stobbe, 2020). Petrie et al. (2020) concluded, "Tomorrow's schools need to help learners to think for themselves and join others, with empathy, in work and citizenship" (p. 5). The situation created by COVID-19 created an opportunity for students, parents and teachers to empathetically connect with each other while simultaneously promoted their personal growth and, for teachers, professional improvement (Petrie et al., 2020).

Although speaking in the context of students with disabilities, the words of Nadworny (2020) – who called on the separate work of Whitcher and Desrochers – carries relevance for our discussion on empathy. According to Whitcher, during the pandemic, parents became "the teacher, the therapist, the advocate – they [were] everybody all in one" (Nadworny, 2020). As a result, teachers needed to "flip their thinking" to focus not only on academic progress, but also on life skills, community, and connection (Nadworny, 2020). Hence, "time spent over video chat, or at home, [was] a great opportunity for parents and teachers to actually get to know the students in the context of their family" (Whitcher in Nadworny, 2020). Desrochers thus suggested teachers make lessons connect to real life and urged "teachers and parents to lean into the tools and objects students have in the home" (Nadworny, 2020). Increased connections and associated empathy for students and their families during COVID-19 thus afforded schools and teachers the opportunity to adapt the learning experience to better suit their students' learning needs, interests, and resources.

The learning@home experience deepened awareness, appreciation, understanding, and respect among students, parents, and teachers for their importance, particular circumstances, and different roles. Strengthened emphasis by schools and teachers on nurturing, holistic approaches toward students and families and more personalised approaches to student learning were two examples of change during this time. Both highlighted the relational, reciprocal, responsive processes that underpin the work of empathy. This work opened up more opportunities for movement on the parent involvement-engagement continuum toward engagement (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

Conclusions and implications

Throughout this article we called on the concepts of change and continuity to consider parent engagement in the context of COVID-19. We described and explained what parent engagement is and why it's vital to student success at school and later life. We drew on Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) parent involvement-engagement continuum to conceptualise different ways parents engage in their child's learning and wellbeing. We extended their model to include a focus on the dialogic processes that underpin examples of parent engagement success. Relational, inclusive, interactive, supportive, innovative, purposeful, collaborative, responsive, and reciprocal processes were among those noted. We also explored multiple barriers to parent engagement from the vantage point of our EPIC research and compared these to the literature. The persistence of these barriers highlighted why the potential of parent engagement may not yet be fully realised. Finally, we examined stories of parent engagement success that emerged from Queensland's 2020 learning@home experience to respond to the provocation: How does change catalysed by COVID-19 open up opportunities for parent engagement now and in the future? Drawing on our EPIC research and other available information and studies, we considered these stories using C-H-A-N-G-E as an acronym to discuss six interrelated and mutually reinforcing aspects of parent engagement under the headings of: Connections, Home-school alignment, Agency, New and different roles for parents, Generative collaboration among teachers, and Empathy.

The imperative of the COVID-19 crisis meant that engaging parents in their child's learning and wellbeing needed to be prioritised if student progress and development at school were to continue without significant disruption. The question of parent engagement therefore was not one of *if* or *when*, but *how*. The ubiquity of online technology provided answers in the form of improved use of existing communication forms such as phone and email while simultaneously offered a multitude of digital platforms and channels to connect schools and families. Although experiencing the pandemic together meant schools and families were more open to students learning online, implementing this change came with multiple challenges. Decisions had to be made quickly about how to manage the transition. Issues of equity of access to quality resources to support online learning for all families were exposed. Teachers with little prior experience in online environments suddenly needed to develop new pedagogies and skills.

As this article shows, the change to learning@home also brought positive outcomes for engaging parents in their child's learning and wellbeing. The creation of safe, supportive, interactive spaces for communicating and learning facilitated positive relationships among students, parents, and teachers. Deepening understanding of how students learn in different contexts encouraged: empathy and respect among all parties, greater home-school alignment, and more personalised learning for students. Schools and teachers recognised the interdependence of family and student wellbeing and strengthened their focus on both. Parents learnt more about their child – what they knew, what they could do, what they had difficulty with – and were enabled to play more active roles in their learning and wellbeing. They also learnt more about teachers and their work and the importance of their child's teachers in their life. Generative collaboration among teachers encouraged professional learning communities which became seed beds of innovation while simultaneously offered places for personal and professional growth and support.

There was considerable variability in the experiences of schools during the learning@home period and each was located at a different point on the parent involvement-engagement continuum. To further the parent engagement agenda in their context and setting, schools might now ask: What changes worked well?, What should be continued?, What should be discontinued?, and What can be improved?. Topics schools might explore include:

- How can student learning and wellbeing remain central when engaging parents?
- Where are the opportunities to enhance student and parent agency?
- How can the lines of communication between home and school be kept open?
- What opportunities are there to engage parents more dialogically?
- How can parent knowledge and expertise be folded into curriculum planning and implementation?
- How can online technology be exploited to make learning more flexible and to better align with the needs of students and families?
- How can online technology be harnessed in distinct and innovative ways that encourage parent engagement as opposed to mirroring more traditional parent involvement approaches (e.g., to provide student report cards)?
- How can students who experience significant challenges learning online be supported (e.g., no internet/computer, learning disabilities)?
- How can current school structures (e.g., time and space) be reimagined to embed a philosophy and pedagogy of parent engagement?
- Where are the opportunities for generative collaboration among teachers and how can these spaces be created and sustained?
- How can teachers' capacity for parent engagement be increased?
- Calling on their experience of leading change during the learning@home period, how can principals help reform parent engagement policy and practice?
- What are the opportunities to learn more about and/or engage in research in parent engagement?

COVID-19 has caused unprecedented disruption to schools and education systems worldwide. This article on parent engagement during the learning@home experience showed many positive changes were achieved despite the crisis. Much of what we learnt about parent engagement from schools who shared their success stories was already known. Findings from research (e.g, Goodall, 2017; Pushor et al., 2013; Willis & Exley, 2018) have previously highlighted the potential far-reaching benefits of adopting a philosophy and pedagogy of parent engagement. As schools and families continue in the *new normal*, the learning@home experience presents tantalising possibilities for widespread enduring change in this aspect of education. Reflecting on what she'd like to see continue from the period of learning@home, the words of one St Andrew's Anglican College parent resonate with how this opportunity can be responded to: "The whole approach to building success in students is about involving the parent, the child, and the teachers in school community" (ISQ et al., 2020c).

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