



Parent and
Community
Engagement



Independent Schools
Queensland

choice & diversity



parents network
QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Queensland and the Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network have joined forces to elevate and enhance parent and community engagement in independent schools.

The Difference Between Involvement and Engagement

Parent involvement with schools

relates to parents taking part in school-based activities such as attending events, fundraising or volunteering in class.

Parent engagement with children's learning

is when schools and parents work in partnership, recognising and respecting each other's roles, cultures and backgrounds, with the primary goal of supporting and enhancing student learning.

Examples of family-led learning include shared reading, homework support and positive parent-child interactions. Examples of family-school partnerships include communication about what children are learning and specific information about what families can do to help.

Source: Fox & Olsen. (2014).

Parent Engagement Continuum

INVOLVEMENT

ENGAGEMENT



It is instructive to view involvement and engagement as a continuum and to plot where your overall school approach sits and to also identify your engagement levels with different parent groups within your community, such as early years parents, high school parents, boarding parents and families from Indigenous or English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) backgrounds.

Continuum graphic adapted from Goodall, J. & Montgomery, C. (2014). *Parental involvement to parental engagement: a continuum.*

Why it Matters

Parent communities can be a school's greatest ally in raising student achievement levels.

Decades of international and national research has shown the biggest impacts on student learning are realised when a school engages parents in their child's learning through simple, practical strategies and activities that families can do at home to connect and reinforce what happens inside the classroom.

Inviting families to be involved at school through tuckshop duty or fundraising are important community building activities that lay the foundation for parent engagement. Involvement builds relationships, a sense of community, a common purpose and school culture, providing a starting point to engagement.

"Fifty years of research tells us that parent engagement in children's learning makes a difference.

When parents engage with their children's learning, particularly out of school, attendance increases, behaviour in school improves, homework return rates go up and, overall, children's achievement tends to improve. Children achieve more in school when their families engage in activities such as reading, asking thoughtful questions, and providing the structure children need to complete assignments."

Barker, B., & Harris, D. (2020). *Parent and family engagement: An implementation guide for school communities*. Canberra: ARACY.

THE EVIDENCE

Extensive research has shown the benefits to schools and students when parents are engaged in their child's learning.

Effect – the parent engagement effect is the equivalent of adding an extra two to three years' education over a student's school life (Hattie's, as cited in ARACY, 2017).

Financial value – schools would need to increase per-pupil spending by more than \$1,000 in order to achieve the same results that are gained by parent engagement (Houtenville & Smith Conway, n.d.).

PISA – students whose parents spend time simply talking with them were two thirds of a school year ahead in science learning. The benefit is still one third of a school year even after accounting for socio-economic status (OECD, 2017).

Parent engagement has been identified as a key tool that can help close the achievement gap between children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. When parents are engaged in their child's education and learning it can lead to:

- improved school readiness
- higher retention and graduation rates
- enhanced cognitive development and academic achievement
- higher motivation and greater ability.

NATIONAL POLICY

Governments have prioritised parent engagement and want schools to do the same.

The importance and role of families in a child's education are enshrined in the recently released Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

Parent, community and industry engagement has also been identified as a key focus area in the 2019-2023 Bilateral Agreement between the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments on National School Education Reform.

SCHOOL PRACTICE

Parent engagement is embedded in the Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) (AITSL, 2017).

ISQ Services and Support

PRINCIPAL STANDARD PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

5

Engaging and working with the community

TEACHER STANDARDS FOCUS AREAS

3.7

Engage parents/carers in the educative process

7.3

Engage with the parents/carers

Elements of parent and community engagement are already incorporated into a range of existing Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) programs and services. Extensive parent engagement resources are also available on the Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QIS Parents Network) website.

NEW DIRECTIONS

ISQ and QIS Parents Network have joined forces to elevate and enhance parent and community engagement in independent schools through regular events and programs.

A key program in 2021 is Engaging Parents in Inquiry Curriculum (EPIC), being led by internationally-recognised parent engagement experts Dr Linda Willis and Professor Beryl Exley of Griffith University.

As part of EPIC, six independent schools will have their parent engagement practices analysed and nurtured by the researchers throughout 2021. Insights from the project will be shared with all ISQ member schools.

"Engagement is bringing parents closer to their child's learning and schools are best placed to take a proactive role in fostering that.

Parents are the first and continuing teachers of their children, so it's important for schools to recognise this and to think of parents in a positive way by asking: 'How can we help bring what the child is learning at school and what the parent knows about what their child is learning at school closer together?'

When schools do that, it's potentially game-changing".

Dr Linda Willis, one of Australia's leading researchers into parent engagement, Griffith University, Brisbane.

QIS Parents Network. (2019). Parent engagement: Simple yet game-changing. www.parentsnetwork.qld.edu.au/2019/09/03/parent-engagement-simple-yet-game-changing/

Expressions of Interest

Schools that want to work with ISQ and the QIS Parents Network to prioritise parent engagement are invited to contact ISQ to register their interest.

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A Voice for Independent School Parents

The QIS Parents Network is the recognised representative body and a strong voice for the needs and interests of parents who choose an independent education for their children. The QIS Parents Network is also a strong advocate for positive and respectful learning partnerships between schools, parents and children. It strives to build and enhance parent engagement through its hub of extensive online resources, school-driven research projects and ongoing leadership in the area.

www.parentsnetwork.qld.edu.au



Contact Us

For more information
about this service:

SHARI ARMISTEAD

DIRECTOR (STRATEGIC RELATIONS)

E sarmistead@isq.qld.edu.au

P (07) 3228 1543

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Head Office

Level 1, 96 Warren Street, Spring Hill Q 4000
PO Box 957, Spring Hill Q 4004
P (07) 3228 1515 **E** office@isq.qld.edu.au

Professional Learning Centre

Level 5, 500 Queen Street, Brisbane Q 4000
P (07) 3228 1507 **E** events@isq.qld.edu.au

www.isq.qld.edu.au