

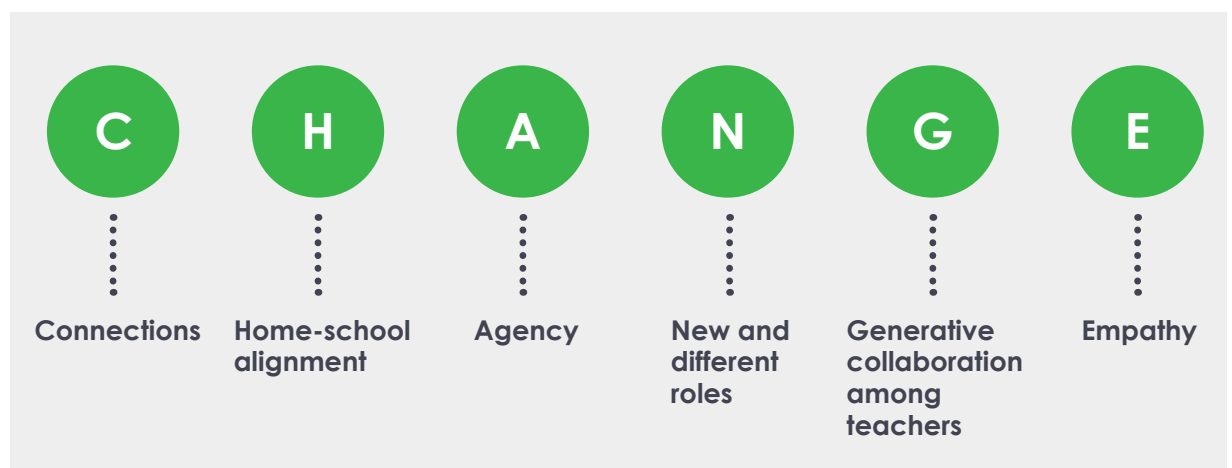
C-H-A-N-G-E Framework

EPIC - Engaging Parents in Curriculum



Establishing and sustaining parent and community engagement and impact: Research-informed practices

The Parent Engagement C-H-A-N-G-E Framework (Willis & Exley, 2020) documents research-informed practices from Engaging Parents in Curriculum (EPIC) research for schools and teachers wishing to establish and sustain parent and community engagement in student learning. The framework comprises six interconnected themes: **C**onnections, **H**ome-school alignment, **A**gency, **N**ew and different roles, **G**enerative collaboration, and **E**mpathy. The C-H-A-N-G-E Framework can be used at the *macro* level of school processes and policies, the *meso* level of teaching and leadership teams, and the *micro* level of the classroom. Previous research (Willis & Exley, 2022; Willis, Exley, & Daffurn, 2021a) highlighted how the framework assists teachers and school leaders to integrate parent engagement in the design and delivery of curriculum.



Notes

The Engaging Parents in Curriculum (EPIC) researchers use the term, **parents**, to describe a child's biological parents or significant others such as carers, family members, and Elders responsible for a student's health, wellbeing, and education.

The term, **community**, describes formal and informal connections and relationships with individuals, groups, organisations, and businesses within and outside schools which increase opportunities and provide resources and support to enhance student learning and wellbeing.

Volunteers will need to satisfy official requirements to work with children (e.g., the Blue Card requirements which operate in Queensland). Schools can offer opportunities (e.g., a short course relevant to their context) for parents/ community members to become volunteers at the school.

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Connections



Connections is about contact and communication to establish and sustain open, trusting home-school relationships.

Practices	Suggestions and examples
C1 Encourage positive, respectful relationships with parents through formal/informal school channels and parent-led social channels (e.g., Facebook groups).	Open the relationship bank account early—including before students commence school (e.g., playgroups, family library mornings, parent spaces, assemblies, activity days) and build positive relationships as students and families progress through the school. Have processes in place for new school families who join outside typical transition points.
C2 Regularly communicate to parents and staff the benefits of engaging parents for students, families, teachers, schools, and communities.	Use relevant research findings and illustrations of practice to open conversations about the importance of engaging parents in their child's learning and wellbeing.
C3 Use the language of engagement in communication with parents including school frameworks, policy documents, and curriculum overviews.	Engagement language is welcoming, invitational, inclusive, and respects parents' different situations. It refers to parents and teachers as partners, learning journey companions, and working together as a team.
C4 Coordinate what, how, and when parents receive information from the school and/or teachers.	For example, send one email to the school/classroom community at a set time each day/week. Where appropriate, apply digital filters so information for a specific group of parents is not sent to the whole school. Ensure teachers know about sessions hosted for parents, and if relevant, free up time for teachers to attend.
C5 Discuss with teachers and parents communication protocols that foster consistency in content, style, volume, frequency, and timing across the school/year levels.	Adopt universal practices in relation to: classrooms (e.g., teachers are always inviting parents in; the door is always open), student diaries, emails, contact times, digital platforms (e.g., Seesaw®), and parent-led social channels.
C6 Set up a central source of information such as the school newsletter or Learning Management System for official communication relevant to the school community.	Integrate digital technology and human systems so the central source of information provides a single point of truth (e.g., one not multiple calendars of school activities). Select important information from the central source to disseminate to parents/school community using a range of different digital platforms (e.g., school website, social media sites). Encourage any parent-led social channels to refer to the school's central information source.
C7 Adopt interactive, personal forms of communication where possible.	Use video newsletters or innovative formats such as a school radio station to enable interactivity between school/staff, parents, and students. Invite families to assemblies and informal gatherings (e.g., coffee mornings, family picnics) to facilitate teacher-to-parent and parent-to-parent interactions.
C8 Encourage a culture of openness, transparency, and trust by establishing processes for collecting, analysing, and responding to parent feedback.	Establish ways of working that enable continuous feedback loops. For example, provide regular updates about responses to parent feedback in the school newsletter.
C9 Regularly gather data from parents, students, and staff about different communication practices and the nature and quality of communication for engaging parents in their child's learning and wellbeing.	Generate data using surveys, audits, focus groups, advisory groups, school blogs, social media, and personal conversations. Review the findings together with parents, students, and staff (e.g., ask What's working? What are the complexities and challenges? What can be improved?).



Home-school alignment



Home-school alignment is about continuing and expanding learning at school in the home environment.

Practices	Suggestions and examples
H1 Develop Term Overviews using parent-friendly language which detail learning areas, curriculum foci, assessment tasks, and suggested ideas/questions for parents to support their child's learning and wellbeing.	For consistency of practice across year levels and learning areas, make Term Overviews available as early as possible each Term and digitally pin them to the top of parent email lists or social media feeds.
H2 Create a dynamic record of parents' expertise, interests, and willingness/availability to contribute to curriculum areas and topics.	Gather information from parents systematically and securely such as during enrolment interviews, when Term Overviews are made available, transition points (e.g., as students move into Prep, Primary, Junior, Secondary years), and when onboarding new students (all year levels).
H3 Embed parent engagement throughout curriculum design and planning.	Use the C-H-A-N-G-E Framework to highlight opportunities for engaging parents in year-level curriculum unit plans.
H4 Invite parents into the classroom to talk with their child about what they're learning.	Offer regular classroom Sneak Peeks where students show their parents a portfolio of their learning. Provide suggested questions for parents to ask their child while they look at the portfolio together.
H5 Legitimise conversations about aspects of the curriculum in the home environment by inviting parents to discuss relevant experiences, stories, ideas, perspectives, life lessons, and opinions with their child.	Invite parents to participate in their child's learning and wellbeing using the S-S-O-O-P-P Framework (pronounced soup): short, sharp, often, optional, purposeful, and personalised to parents and their child (Willis & Exley, 2022). Email parents with suggested topics and/or questions for dinner table conversations. Let older students develop their own questions to email to their parents (e.g., Have you ever faced a moral dilemma? What was it? What happened?).
H6 Close the loop by asking students to share and/or show their peers (with permission) what their parents talked about at home or wrote in emails in response to invitations from them or the teacher.	Share parent responses to curriculum questions on a secure shared platform where all students have access. Allow students to discuss the responses, compare/contrast ideas, draw conclusions, generate further questions, and explore the value of hearing from parents.
H7 Encourage teachers to continually build their portfolio of knowledge and practice in parent engagement.	Create a secure repository of curriculum resources (e.g., video clips, photographs, artefacts) from parents/community members to use (with permission) in subsequent years with different classes.
H8 Recognise the power of literacy to engage students and parents in curriculum learning and wellbeing beyond the classroom.	Examples include: sharing stories (e.g., life happenings, memories, connections to people/places); oral/written histories (e.g., family ancestors, heraldry); Storybook Reads with family members; Show and Share opportunities; family library mornings; and intergenerational projects.
H9 Spend time with individual teachers to talk with them personally about parent engagement and brainstorm ideas about how they might engage parents/community in the curriculum.	Share examples of teachers engaging parents in the curriculum with others including the school community (e.g., feature a Classroom in the Spotlight in the school newsletter and/or on social media channels).



Agency



Agency is about recognising the nature and value of parent agency for building the capacity of their child to participate actively in their own learning.

Practices	Suggestions and examples
A1 Use formal and informal opportunities to highlight the reciprocal relationship between student and parent agency for enhancing student learning and wellbeing.	Speak often about the unique role of parents in their child's life. Incorporate language that reflects this uniqueness (e.g., parents are a child's first and lifelong teachers; children belong to families). Use research findings and videos to show how engaging parents increases student agency to further their own learning and wellbeing.
A2 Develop teachers' understanding about the delineation between <i>involving</i> and <i>engaging</i> parents. Highlight how involving focuses on the relationship between the school and parents as passive recipients, whereas engaging focuses on the relationship between parents and their child's learning and wellbeing as active recipients.	Schedule professional learning sessions focused on parent engagement. Create a dynamic display (physically/virtually) about what parent engagement is and what it isn't. Include drawings, pictures, photographs, anecdotes, stories, artefacts (e.g., emails). Critically discuss activities and pedagogical practices for engaging parents at your school.
A3 Rethink parent involvement activities through the lens of parent engagement to increase student and parent agency for enhanced curriculum learning and wellbeing.	Use graphic organisers (e.g., <i>Fruyer Model</i> , <i>T & Y-charts</i>) or a continuum with involvement and engagement at opposite ends (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014) to explore how conceptual and pedagogical shifts can enhance student and parent agency in your school's context.
A4 Include parent engagement as a standing item on formal meeting agendas for teachers, school leaders, staff and/or parents. Place this item in a prominent position on the agenda to highlight its value as an integral part of practice.	Use staff and/or parent meetings (e.g., Parents & Friends Association) to strengthen knowledge and affirm parent engagement practice. Share information; discuss fallacious thinking and assumptions (e.g., that engaging parents is about parents telling teachers what to do); celebrate shared learning between home and the classroom; explore how teaching and teacher satisfaction are enriched.
A5 Strategise ways to draw upon existing resources and networks available to parents and students which support curriculum learning and teaching.	Resources can include human (e.g., knowledge) and material resources. Connections can include formal/informal relationships with past/present families, community members, government agencies, organisations, industries, and businesses.
A6 Start with the curriculum and invite significant others with relevant knowledge and expertise to partner with you and your students in the learning and teaching journey.	Significant others can include parents, grandparents, family members, Indigenous Elders, and community members who accept invitations to become subject matter experts, artists in residence, and coteachers in curriculum planning and delivery.
A7 Create videos to show what happens in the home environment when parents open conversations about the curriculum using inquiry questions provided by teachers.	Video parents using a list of inquiry questions provided by the teacher to initiate conversations with their child. Highlight how parents draw on specific knowledge of their child (e.g., experiences, interests, connections, curiosity) to contextualise the curriculum in the home environment.
A8 Facilitate parent agency to support their child's learning and wellbeing as early as possible.	For example, turn early years observation days into practical workshops where parents interact with staff (e.g., school psychologist) and health professionals to prepare them for their child's next learning phase.
A9 Facilitate teachers' pedagogical practices for engaging parents through conversations which encourage mindfulness and intentionality about the nature and value of parent agency.	Some questions to discuss: If parents attend a school event, what will we do to engage them? What's important to parents? How can we help parents to see the part they play in building a relationship with their child through the curriculum? How can we engage with parents as partners in their child's learning and wellbeing journey?



A



Agency

New and different roles



New and different roles is about formal and informal positions and parts school and community personnel can play to respond to recognised and emerging needs in your school context to support parent engagement.

Practices	Suggestions and examples
N1 Create formal leadership positions on staff with a dedicated focus on parent/community engagement (e.g., Parent Engagement Officer/Coordinator, Head of Family Engagement, Parent Engagement Worker).	Suitably qualified personnel for parent engagement roles can include school leaders, teachers, and parents with deep knowledge of the school and curriculum and recognised skills for working collaboratively with parents/communities (consider city/country communities in distance education). Continually review such roles to ensure the work involved is supported by the resources available (e.g., time, personnel).
N2 Recognise the role of advocacy in promoting a culture and pedagogy of parent engagement. Think of advocacy as gently opening a conversation about parent engagement.	Ask questions such as: Are parents at the table? Where are the opportunities for parent voice? How do parent engagement plans connect to student learning and wellbeing? Use parent engagement research to talk with others about what you do and why – formally/informally (e.g., professional learning sessions; curriculum planning days; school leader, faculty, heads of department meetings; parent evenings, activity days; conference presentations; academic/professional publications; local newspapers; buddy schools; hallway, carpark, coffee shop chats).
N3 Allow students, parents, and community members to take up particular and varied roles in ways that work for them.	Students, parents, and community members may: coteach aspects of the curriculum (sport, camps, classroom); facilitate educational workshops, family-support groups, family/staff camps; co-lead playgroups; co-write grant proposals; compose music for performances; co-design/make sets, props, costumes; collaborate on projects (e.g., community gardens).
N4 Encourage school leaders and teachers to become parent engagement researchers.	Collaboratively explore ways to evaluate the sustainability and impact of parent engagement initiatives/practices on: student learning, behaviour, attendance, retention, and teacher satisfaction/workload. Discuss research design, data collection, analysis, findings, and implications.
N5 Enable parents to play active roles alongside the school/teachers in helping their child make decisions about their learning journey.	For senior secondary school subject selection, for example, use three-way conferences. Provide a guide to scaffold productive conversations between students and parents at home. Encourage critical reflection about what further information/tools students might need. Three-way conferences invite parents to dialogue with their child and the school which fosters a sense of co-responsibility for the student's learning.
N6 Use appropriate metaphors to describe and explain the roles teachers and parents play in creating a culture of engaging parents.	Examples include dot connectors and weavers which describe how teachers and parents connect the dots to people and/or curriculum and weave information and ideas throughout groups and from place to place.
N7 Set up a Networker Supporters' Group for the purpose of engaging parents.	The group's focus might include activities and strategies for networking with others and facilitating parent engagement in the curriculum.
N8 Work with Parent Advisors who volunteer to coordinate initiatives proposed and organised by other parents to connect families socially as well as to student learning and wellbeing.	Recognise the need of families for social connections especially distance education families. Parent Advisors may assist to organise initiatives run by parents of the school for families in different locations/regions as well as families in different education settings (e.g., homeschooling).
N9 Regularly consult/liase with parents about relevant aspects of the school, parent engagement, and student learning and wellbeing.	Invite parents to form an advisory group or create other suitable forums which allow the school to gather information securely (e.g., feedback, suggestions, advice) from parents. Use the information to: test opinions and hunches about what's happening; generate new data; and build a more complete picture at macro, meso, and micro levels.



Generative collaboration among teachers



Generative collaboration is about interactive social spaces into which school leaders, teachers, parents and students enter to understand and learn more about engaging parents in their school context.

Practices	Suggestions and examples
G1 Form a group of parent engagement champions such as a Parent Engagement Leadership Team (PELT) with representatives from across the school. Use cogenerative dialoguing protocols to encourage productive conversations among group members (Willis, 2013; Willis & Exley, 2020, 2022; Willis et al., 2021).	Encourage diversity in the PELT (e.g., school leaders from different areas of the school; teachers from different year levels or those who teach day students or online students; parents of primary and secondary students; parents in different locations; staff in specialist roles such as parent and community engagement, pastoral care/wellbeing, marketing/communication). Discuss key roles and goals for the group.
G2 Schedule regular times that all parent engagement champions can attend in-person and/or virtually to dialogue cogeneratively about parent engagement.	Safeguard meeting times of parent engagement champions from possible disruptions (e.g., clashes with teaching commitments). Be flexible when members cannot attend regular meetings (e.g., parent engagement buddies might catch up at other times to talk about the group's work). Create opportunities for members to contribute between meetings (e.g., use an online collaboration platform such as Miro board).
G3 At the curriculum planning stage, invite parents/community members to cogenerate with teachers about avenues for input. Adopt horizontal and vertical approaches that tap into parent/community interest/expertise at class, year, or school levels.	Share curriculum ideas (e.g., inquiry questions) and resources (e.g., parent surveys/results) with colleagues. Form communities of learners horizontally and/or vertically (e.g., year-level colleagues teaching the same subject or teaching the same students in different subjects; colleagues teaching particular subjects across different year levels).
G4 Year level teachers cogenerate to reflect on the parent and community engagement initiatives connected to a unit of work.	Discuss suggestions for engagement at the end of term to gauge: what ideas were helpful; how ideas were taken up; benefits for students/parents/teachers; and ways to improve future planning documents.
G5 Recognise the power of 'word of mouth' to generate a positive ripple effect about: how the school values parents; benefits of engaging parents; impactful parent engagement practices; and the work of parent engagement champions.	Take opportunities to discuss with colleagues about parent engagement or what parent engagement champions are doing (e.g., aims, current initiatives). Help colleagues to understand that engaging parents is not something that needs to be scary or big, but often involves gentle shifts in existing practice (e.g., a short, regular message rather than big events).
G6 Set up academic conversations with day/boarding students to build their agency for enhanced learning and wellbeing. Academic conversations use student data to discuss: progress in different subjects, observable trends, possible strategies to use, and available support.	Let parents know about upcoming academic conversations and explain their purpose. Talk with students about their data. Discuss what's working well, what they'd like to improve, strategies they can adopt (e.g., asking questions more in class). Help students action their plans (e.g., email tutorial teachers with the student if they don't feel confident). Encourage parents to talk with their child throughout the process.
G7 Host periodic gatherings of alumni students and families for the purpose of keeping conversations going with them about connecting with the school and staying involved.	Collaboratively discuss how alumni might contribute to student learning and wellbeing through: participating in school celebrations; facilitating workshops; giving guest speeches; providing career guidance; and becoming co-collaborators with students on inquiry projects.
G8 Use on/off campus and online places and spaces to encourage generative collaboration among parents.	Libraries, virtual rooms, community centres (e.g., museums, art galleries), a Family Resource Centre, and meetings of parent groups (e.g., Parents & Friends Association, Friends of the Arts) afford spaces for cogenerative dialogues about student learning and wellbeing.
G9 Encourage positive relationships through dialogic conversations focused on student learning and wellbeing among students, families, and teachers.	Invite parents into listening and learning conversations about aspects of student learning and wellbeing. Create conducive environments for substantive conversations between parents and their child (e.g., a pancake morning or philosophy café).



Empathy



Empathy is about parents, students, teachers, and schools recognising and respecting how the diverse perspectives and circumstances of others can influence possibilities and opportunities for agency and engagement.

Practices	Suggestions and examples
E1 Encourage a listening pedagogy at macro, meso, and micro levels.	Conduct listening tours with different groups of parents (e.g., meet in different locations/regions to accommodate boarding or distance education families). Gather information formally/informally about what parents say are harder issues to navigate with their child (e.g., safe technology use). Onboarding sessions could include opportunities to listen to parents, for parents to connect with one another, and for parents to connect with their child.
E2 Shift from a school/teacher perspective to a parent/family perspective. Family dynamics, childcare, travel distance, ability to join online, and duration/timing of events all affect possibilities of parent engagement. Think about the shift like adjusting a camera lens.	Interrogate documents, processes, and systems designed for parents to use and understand with your parent hat on. Ask: Is the document user-friendly? Is the process clear and simple? What support do parents need to navigate curriculum change or new systems? Have we made the invitation for parents to engage explicit?
E3 Recognise the effects since 2020 of the COVID-19 pandemic on families which continue to impact life, work, and study. Equally recognise the power of positive relationships to enable parent/community engagement and support individual and collective wellbeing.	Envision ways for school communities to connect emotionally and engender a sense of belonging. Facilitate more parent engagement opportunities through discussion (face-to-face/online) (e.g., incorporate stories of the school's history/culture; invite parents and students to reminisce about their school experiences; ask students, parents, teachers to share their hopes and dreams for themselves, one another, and the world).
E4 Support parents and students who are new to learn about the school and connect with others.	Buddy new parents with existing parents who volunteer to support new families. Having parent buddies for all year levels (K–12) (at least one per year level) ensures parents of students who enrol outside typical transition points also learn about the school and can connect with others.
E5 Consider ways to support parents with changes in the curriculum, service delivery models, operating systems, and new digital technologies.	Develop short videos to support parents to manage changes at the school which affect them/their child. Hold regular online parent sessions which provide personalised technical support. Include information on the school website to address frequently asked questions from parents or set up a school News Desk, Distance Education Diary, or a school radio station.
E6 Design parent engagement activities that don't add more to teacher workloads, but do things differently in ways that everyone benefits.	If the activity involves busy work such as catering, collecting RSVPs, picking up resources from the museum, or going to the local creek to photograph new foliage, invite parents to be involved. Over time, you'll get a good sense of what's possible.
E7 Discuss with parents the pros/cons of different forms of communication/digital platforms for facilitating engagement in their child's learning and wellbeing.	Work with parents to make decisions about fit-for-purpose forms of communication and technology to support engagement in their child's learning across the years of school (K–12). Be consistent across the years of schooling. This helps parents with two or more children of different ages.
E8 Recognise that schools are complex organisations and parents have to collaborate with many different people (e.g., school leaders, teachers, auxiliary staff, parents, students).	As you seek to engage parents, ensure all the school staff know about the initiatives so they can promote them positively. Create measures so staff can see demonstrable outcomes of parent engagement initiatives.
E9 Recognise that parents and families may be influenced by their own experiences of school which can impact possibilities of engagement.	Parents and families appreciate schools/teachers who show professionalism, respect, care, and compassion and invite them to engage in their child's learning in simple, authentic, and practical ways.

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