

Key dimension: Communicate

Family-School Partnerships Framework

A guide for schools and families

Strategies for communication

'Communicate' is one of the seven key dimensions identified in the *Family-School Partnerships Framework* as guidelines for planning partnership activities. Strategies that utilise this dimension aim to support the development of constructive and sustainable relationships in the school community by building the capacity of school leaders and teachers, and actively encouraging parent and family engagement.

- Display 'welcome' signs and other relevant information around the school using inclusive and positive language.
- School administrative staff play a very important role in setting a welcoming and supportive culture within the school as the first point of contact. Consider how parents and families interact with the school's front office and administration processes.
- Provide learning opportunities for school leaders and teachers to help them communicate with families and respond effectively to the needs of their school community.
- Provide learning opportunities for teachers to build on verbal and written reporting skills. This supports teachers to report effectively, and hold constructive discussions with students and families about progress and planning for future learning goals.
- Use positive language that affirms the important role of parents and families as partners in learning. Think about how parents and families are invited to participate in school-based events and activities and are recognised for their input and their input is valued.
- Develop an understanding of family communication needs and preferences, as well as family interests and goals. This could be done through focus groups, conversations and surveys.
- Actively engage with parents and families about their child's learning. Utilise all communication methods and channels currently being used in school to communicate positive student progress and celebrate successes.
- Encourage involvement by seeking class-parent representatives to assist teachers in working with families. This will provide an informal support network and collaborative working group to support school-family. Be clear with the role, function and expectations for class-parent representatives and review what worked and what could work better at the end of each year.
- Review induction, orientation and transition processes to improve information sharing and ensure parents and families are included in the development of processes, practices and parent-support information.
- Review newsletters, parent information brochures and other regularly used methods of communication, and give parents and families an opportunity to provide feedback.

- Work with parents, carers, families and community members to produce a handbook on the school mission, values, goals, policies, curriculum standards, assessment procedures and school rules. Also include information about opportunities for parents and families to be involved in school-based activities.
- Communicate clearly with families about upcoming school events and activities, give plenty of notice and actively encourage their involvement.
- Put in place a variety of parent-teacher communication options including face-to-face, telephone, email and web-based contact.
- Involve students in interviews and other communications from the school.
- Appoint a school contact person, such as a community and family liaison officer to facilitate teacher and parent communication. The contact person can also provide information and workshops for school staff and parents to encourage and support family-school engagement.

Culturally and linguistically diverse families

Consider the communication needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families and other groups in the school community.

- Use plain English, and other languages as needed. This will ensure all members of the school community have access to clear information about the school's operations and education practices.
- Employ bilingual office staff if needed and train staff in cultural awareness.
- Provide professional development for staff to learn about the history, culture and family practices of Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse families and other groups in the community.
- Ensure cultural inclusiveness is reflected in teaching and classroom practices, and administrative and education support services in the school.