Communication

Effective communication between schools, parents, students and the community forms the foundation for developing and maintaining partnerships. To have a significant impact on student outcomes, communication needs to be focused on student learning and wellbeing. It must also be a genuine exchange of information and ideas between the student, the school, the home and the community.

Schools have a responsibility to help parents understand the 'language of learning' including the terms used by teachers in the classroom with students to communicate learning goals and expectations. This will assist parents to discuss learning with their child at home and to effectively communicate with teachers using a common language.

Points to consider

▶ Is student progress communicated to parents in a positive and meaningful way? How? Are parents advised of student's strengths as well as areas for improvement?

▶ Is it clear what teachers and parents need to discuss? How?

▶ Is the school using language that is clear and accessible to parents and students and helpful for exploring learning development, challenges and success?

▶ How can school leaders work with parents and the community to establish a shared set of expectations about schooling?

▶ What practices support communication between the school and parents' individual circumstances including working parents, rural and remote parents and parents with a disability?

▶ What practices support communication between the school and parents from diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, and parents who have English as an Additional Language or Dialect?

▶ Do all parents feel comfortable communicating with school staff? Do parents know the school's preferred communication channels? Is the school flexible with these arrangements? Does the school know parents' preferred modes of communication?

▶ Is genuine communication occurring between the school and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and community Elders?

▶ How does the school communicate with industry and business partners?

Links with the NSIT

Communication aligns with the following aspect of Domain 3 of the NSIT:

▶ Interactions between staff, students, parents and families are caring, polite and inclusive.

Achieving results: Ideas for improvement

Every day

☑ Ensure communication is positive, accurate, meaningful and respectful to nurture a shared belief in high expectations for all students.

☑ Use language that is clear and accessible to parents and the community. Avoid or explain confusing educational terms. Find ways to educate parents in the language of learning (for example, through school newsletters, social media, and information or discussion sessions).

☑ Establish consistent expectations for how teachers communicate with parents to support student learning and wellbeing.

☑ Provide access to information in other languages and modes to meet the diverse needs of parents and community members (for example, in person through sign language, translators, easy English, in written languages other than English). This may include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and parents and next of kin for whom English may not be a first language.

☑ Show that the school is genuine in its desire to build understanding of students' backgrounds by creating an environment that provides opportunities for students and parents to share their stories and perspectives.

☑ Use assistive technology and other communication aids to better support inclusion of students and parents with disability.

Early in the school year

☑ Take the opportunity to communicate and engage with parents and children who have recently enrolled at the school.

☑ Establish opportunities for parents to meet with their child's teacher/s.

☑ Encourage parents to share knowledge, aspirations and concerns with their child's teachers.

☑ Have cultural liaison staff available to welcome and assist families.

☑ Communicate with parents about the best times for them to talk with teachers.

☑ Ensure parents know about the various methods of communication the school will use, and what opportunities are available for parents/carers to formally and informally communicate with the school.

☑ Engage with parents and communities to establish relationships characterised by knowledgeable respect for all cultural groups in the school community.

☑ Consider every aspect of communication including non-verbal cues, the design of physical spaces in the school (especially the school office), signage and the processes used by staff to make parents and community members feel welcome and valued.

☑ Invite the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) to assist school staff to get to know their community.

☑ Ensure the P&C is reflective of the school community.

Throughout the year

☑ Make informal contact a deliberate part of parent and community engagement. Spend time with parents and community members in informal settings and at social events so that school staff and family/community members can get to know each other and build respect and trust over time.

☑ For new students, review transitions statements, OneSchool information, transfer notes and any other information available from previous education providers.

☑ Send home positive examples of students' work regularly to show parents what their child has learnt.

☑ Invite the wider school community to special event days at the school to showcase students' learning for example, Grandparents' Day, Under 8's day, NAIDOC week, Career Expos.

☑ Promote good news and activities through newsletters, social media and local media.

Once a year

☑ Develop a social media plan as an additional communication channel for parents and the community.

☑ Organise school open days to allow community members to tour the school, promote students' work and allow the community to experience how the school operates.