

Engaging with Families

What are the benefits of engaging families in an OSHLSP?

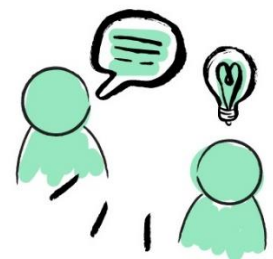
Increasingly, evidence shows that family engagement in children's education is one of the biggest indicators for educational success. There are many advantages to including families into the everyday structure and running of your Out-of-School-Hours Learning Support Program (OSHLSP):



- ❖ Including parents in your program offers a safe and inclusive space for parents to engage in their child's education, in a way that they may not yet be comfortable doing with their child's school. Through seeing the kind of work their child does and chatting with tutors, parents may also gain a better understanding of the Australian educational system, which can be a difficult system for culturally and linguistically diverse families to navigate.
- ❖ Having families engage with the OSHLSP can assist the families in developing confidence around their ability to support their children's learning at home, as they can learn some tutoring tips and tricks that will help them to feel more confident helping their children with their schoolwork.
- ❖ Families can be a great support to coordinators. They have excellent insight into both their child's needs and the experiences of the community that your OSHLSP works with, meaning they can be expert problem-solvers, promoters, and advisors.
- ❖ Family members provide positive role models for younger students. Seeing members of their community involved in the club can encourage children and young people to stay involved as students, as well as aspire to be future leaders within the club.
- ❖ Creating connections between families and volunteers can help to increase tutor satisfaction, as they have the chance to hear from parents about the impact their tutoring is having on the student's school experience, leading to greater volunteer retention rates.

Strategies for engaging families

Increasing family engagement in your OSHLSP requires strong relationships built on good communication and trust. This can take time to establish and



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will often look like a series of small steps rather than big changes. Here are some steps you can take:

- ❧ Encourage parents to sit with their child and tutor during a session. This can help them learn strategies from the tutor and to feel more engaged in their child's learning.
- ❧ Ensure that you are asking for parents' advice and perspectives in any matters which would affect them or their child.
- ❧ Try giving parents a task that they're comfortable with, such as helping in the kitchen, greeting students and helping them to sign in, or working with junior students.
- ❧ Employ parents in a role such as a board member, advisor, or co-coordinator.
- ❧ Run a concurrent activity for parents. This could be a conversation circle, a knitting group, a digital literacy club, a drop-in time to help with filling out forms, or a time for community organisations to hold information session for parents, depending on the identified needs and interests of parents.
- ❧ Hold an open day or social event which encourages parents to participate. This may be more suitable for some families, as it doesn't ask for an ongoing commitment.
- ❧ Create opportunities for parents to teach children skills, such as learning a dance, song, or some language from their culture.
- ❧ Pair parents who are new to the club with families who have been at the club for a long time to help them feel comfortable as they learn about the rules and expectations at the club.



Common challenges to family engagement

Although there may be barriers that can make family engagement in your homework club more difficult, there are ways to overcome them and develop positive relationships between your club and families:

- ❧ Low levels of English language or literacy can make communication and collaboration with parents difficult. You can help to overcome this by having forms and information sheets translated into community languages and simple English, and asking senior students or other parents to act as translators. You could also hold an open day or information session where you ask for translators to help with presentations about your club and answering questions.

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- ❧ Parents may not have the time to be involved with the club. This can help to be overcome by making the time useful and worthwhile for them as well, through running a concurrent activity designed for them, as mentioned above, or finding a time that works well for them to participate in ways such as giving advice.
- ❧ Parents may not feel like experts in their child's education and this might mean they are unwilling to participate, or feel nervous. Try finding roles for them that they feel confident in, and developing a culture within your club that always seeks the guidance of parents to help them feel like a valued member of the community.