

Working with parents and carers to positively influence their child's education

Studies have shown that one of the biggest factors in a child's success at school is parental attitudes and involvement in a child's education. However, school involvement can be a complex and daunting process for families who may have experienced a very different education system and set of expectations. Homework program coordinators can assist families from refugee and migrant backgrounds in understanding the Australian education system and how they, as parents or carers, can positively influence their child's education.



The following information outlines ways that parents can help their child or teenager to reach their potential, either through activities and routines at home or through of involvement with the school.

Parental support at home

Important things that parents can consider at home are to:

- ✿ Show an interest in their child's day at school, including social and learning activities.
- ✿ Develop routines before and after school that include some time for leisure, play and homework.
- ✿ Provide a quiet study space for school work and reading.
- ✿ Ensure their child has adequate sleep so that they are well rested for school the next day (it is important to remember that teenagers generally need at least 9 hours sleep).
- ✿ Pack a healthy lunch and morning tea for school and send a water bottle.
- ✿ If possible, try to support their child with homework, and discuss current affairs and news.
- ✿ Encourage their children to use their first language as well as English. Bilingual or multilingual children often have greater opportunities and stay more connected to their home culture.
- ✿ Consider a balance between television viewing, computer time and other activities to allow adequate time for homework.
- ✿ Praise and encourage their child for effort and work, especially when they have tried hard. Use mistakes and failures as learning opportunities. Display work around the house. Have high but reasonable expectations of their child.

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- ✦ Talk to their teacher/school staff if their child is struggling with school work and homework.
- ✦ Read a [variety of books](#) and other material with their child.
- ✦ Do [basic maths](#) with younger children during daily activities such as when shopping, cooking and driving.
- ✦ Talk to their child about their culture and encourage them to talk about this at school.



Communication with the school

Building good relationships with the school and teachers is important. Actions that parents can take to foster these relationships are:

- ✦ Speak to their child's teacher if they have a concern about school work or other difficulties.
- ✦ Read student reports when they come home. Ask their child's teacher to clarify anything they don't understand. Talk to their child about the things they are doing well and the things they are struggling with. Check younger children's bags for notes and other information.
- ✦ Attend parent/teacher interviews. This is a chance to sit with their child's teacher and discuss progress and difficulties.
- ✦ Read school newsletters so that they are informed about what is happening at the school e.g. new programs and initiatives, staff changes and opportunities to be involved.
- ✦ Attend school events like productions, fetes, and open days.

Volunteering and school involvement

Getting involved in their child's school can assist parents to learn a bit more about the school, its culture and the people who work and study in it. Ideas for volunteering include:

- ✦ Being a member of the parent club at the school, being on the school council, or assisting at the school canteen.



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- ✦ Attending classroom education activities, excursions or helping with specific projects.
- ✦ Assisting with a one-off or annual event such as a school concert or fundraising activities.

Assistance for families with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Parents who speak English as an Additional Language can consider the following:



- ✦ Let the school know if they need an interpreter for interviews, information sessions, enrolments or other meetings. The school can organise interpreters free of charge, but will need some notice for bookings.
- ✦ Find out if their school has a Multicultural Education Aide (MEA). The role of this person is to:
 - assist in the communication between their child and teacher in the classroom
 - help their child to get involved in school activities
 - assist teachers in gaining an understanding of the family's culture and their expectations of the school and education
 - help newly arrived families to settle into the school environment.
- ✦ Talk to their child's teacher about EAL support. Some schools qualify for this support, depending on a number of factors.

What can you do as a coordinator?

- ✦ Help to guide parents through the school system. You might consider holding an information session, or speaking with parents and carers individually.
- ✦ Help parents and carers practice speaking with their school – work through scripts or language that may be useful, or work together on talking about the issues that they may want to discuss with their child's teacher.
- ✦ Ensure that parents and carers feel comfortable participating in your program. This will help them develop confidence with engaging with their child's education. Refer to our tip sheet on 'Engaging Families' for more information.

