**EDUC90989 Capstone Professional Project**

**Assessment Task 3**

**What are the key strategies that underpin Effective Parent Engagement in primary school?**

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I Rebecca Beveridge, acknowledge the use of Grammarly in helping me to review my writing at the final stage of preparing my assessment.  
  
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**Introduction**

Parent engagement and partnerships are critical to successfully developing a child's wellbeing and achievement in school. Teachers worldwide can build strong relationships with families to create overlapping contexts that set children up for success. The importance of including parents and families in students' wellbeing and learning outcomes enables the development of successful partnerships with a shared understanding and responsibility (Epstein, 2001). Schools are essential in creating partnerships with families to work alongside them in their children's learning journey (Hannon & O’Donnell, 2021). As a primary school educator, I believe in the importance of developing partnerships with families to underpin the work within the classroom. Partnerships with families can influence decisions made to help children and support families in influencing their child's learning within the home environment.

A partnership between the school, families and the child can be known as the triad (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). This triad fosters student agency by involving parents in decisions and choices that directly impact their child's development (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). There are many benefits to implementing Parent Engagement, including higher student achievement, the development and advancement of self-concept and self-esteem, and feelings of encouragement and motivation. School and parent partnerships are significantly influenced by a student's wider context at home and in the community (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

By engaging families in various ways, such as events, involvement with their child's learning and ongoing moral and educational support, students are more likely to achieve their goals and aspirations through the help of their support system (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). This support system also enables parents and families to feel committed, have ownership of their children's lives, and determine what they need to put into place to help them (Hattie, 2023).

Ultimately, Parent Engagement can improve school attendance, behaviour, and attitudes (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Meaningful involvement and parenting practices that support children can improve social skills (Smith et al., 2019). By recognising the importance of a family context, schools and teachers can meet children's goals and aspirations through various experiences and opportunities and may support learning (Smith et al., 2019).

In my personal experience, following the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), the number of parents who engage in school events and activities has decreased. It is challenging to understand why parental engagement has dropped so low. Perhaps family’s lives get busier and schools have lot on their schedule.

In my school context, the same parents often turn up for events and help out. This made me curious to ask why more parents aren’t turning up any more. What are schools not doing to ensure Effective Parental Engagement?

This reflection led me to my research question:

***What are the key strategies that underpin Effective Parent Engagement in primary school?***

**Keyword Terminology:**

**Parent Engagement**- Reflects the work and involvement of parents and families in connecting to the school community through activities, learning, and events.

**Key Strategies-** Encompasses the steps that need to be taken to complete a goal or to achieve something.

**Primary School-** Students attending a school that ranges from Prep to Year 6. This is usually between the ages of 4-13.

**Underpin-** Something that forms a justification or support for something.

In conjunction with my research question, I wanted to discover strategies for achieving Effective Parent Engagement. All families want to see their children succeed, all teachers want their families to be involved, and all students want their families to show up (Epstein, 2001). I developed this question to research how school communities could be agents and foster learning within the home environment.

To answer my research question, I conducted a Systematic Literature Review of 15 articles related to Effective Parent Engagement strategies and programs. Throughout this paper, I explore the key elements that underpin how schools can implement Effective Parent Engagement.

**Literature Review**

Much study and research has been conducted over numerous years to support the importance of parent engagement in children's learning at school. Influential work by Joyce Epstein (2001) concludes that there is no greater need in the education system than parent engagement. Epstein (2001) explains how parents need to be viewed as partners in education to allow the development of a caring community. Partners working together have the same shared interests and responsibilities, hence providing children with a support network (Epstein, 2001). Epstein (2001) discusses the importance of how these parties can significantly influence a student's wellbeing and learning outcomes through the overlapping spheres of these partnerships. Epstein (2001) states that developing good relationships and communication practices and recognising different family contexts creates a positive and productive scaffolding for families to help their children succeed (Epstein, 2001). Through these partnerships, children can succeed as they feel supported and motivated (Epstein, 2001). Children who feel encouraged and cared for are more likely to do their best in all aspects of their learning journey (Epstein, 2001). Epstein (2001) describes six types of parent involvement in her framework. Each type of involvement includes many different practices of partnership (Epstein, 2001). These are Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making and Collaborating with the Community (Epstein, 2001).

Similarly, Goodall and Montgomery (2014) discuss how parent engagement moves on a continuum. The continuum represents the change in relational agency and displays the relationship between parents and the school, making the child's learning the objective. This continuum has three different points. The first point is parental involvement with the school, which is the agency of the school that characterises family-school relationships (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). The second point is parental involvement with schooling, characterised by an information interchange between families and teachers. Finally, the third point is Parental engagement with children’s learning (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Goodall and Montgomery (2014) indicate that parents feel valued and supported through this continuum, boosting self-esteem and increasing student motivation and learning outcomes. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) propose that parent engagement is a triad of the student, teacher, and parent and that it is important to share responsibility. Parents who feel included, hold a feeling of ownership and commitment to influence their children's actions (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Goodall and Montgomery (2014) suggest that teachers and the school community should share their funds of knowledge with parents and foster learning within the home environment. Parents' modelling learning at home helps them develop aspirations with their children and ultimately sets their children up for success (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

Moreover, Harris and Goodall (2008) state that parent engagement is one of the key factors in securing school improvement and student achievement. Harris and Goodall (2008) suggest that parents will be involved in their children's learning and development if they see this as their responsibility. Parents are more likely to feel like they matter and are a significant part of their child's development (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Parents need to spark positive educational behaviours and attitudes towards their children to create a sense of urgency and motivation (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Harris and Goodall (2008) emphasise the value of what is done in the home and school environment in conjunction with the parents, which requires a lot of time, effort and commitment. However, this level of engagement and partnerships will have significant effects on children's learning and development (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Harris & Goodall (2008) bring up the importance of understanding the family home environment and background of the child and family, which can help develop a more profound partnership with the school community. Schools that encourage parental engagement and learning at home enable parents to feel supported and connected to their child's development (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

In addition to this, Rapp and Duncan (2012) describe parents as children's first and lifelong teachers, they have an interest in what their child is learning and doing in school. Rapp and Duncan (2012) express the urgency of parents wanting to know how their children are progressing. Schools need to work together with families for each child's success so every child wins (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Rapp and Duncan (2012) discuss that the more parents are connected with the school, the greater student achievement. To ensure this, schools need to attend to the needs of families, making them feel valued, connected and as if they belong (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Rapp & Duncan (2012) outline that schools need to implement and create parent-friendly environments that are welcoming to all families to foster and encourage the development of strong partnerships. Rapp and Duncan (2012) continue to outline that these environments must be purposeful and encourage open communication between all parties involved. Through the implementation of parent engagement, parents feel more included in decision-making processes and feel like they are contributing to their child's success (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Rapp and Duncan (2012) explain that parental engagement is a role where everyone has a part to play. Principals have the important role of encouraging and promoting Parent engagement with staff and enabling teachers to continue to develop their expertise in this area (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Teachers are important in understanding a student's full context and family background to ensure that families feel included (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Parents have the job of promoting and encouraging their children by setting achievable goals and aspirations for them (Rapp & Duncan, 2012).

Moreover, Ogawa (1998) echoes parents' crucial influence over their children's learning outcomes. Ogawa (1998) suggests that schools adopt and implement programs that involve parents in schools to support student achievement. Organisations such as schools bridge when they depend on their environment for resources. Parents are a vital resource to provide knowledge about their children (Ogawa, 1998). Ogawa (1998) urges schools to understand the value parents can provide and bridge to them to increase participation within the school environment. Schools need to have a sense of urgency to encourage parents to engage in educational-related activities with their children and within the school environment (Ogawa, 1998). Ogawa (1998) concludes that for parent engagement to blossom, it is the role of the school community to create opportunities for parents and develop these strong relationships (Ogawa, 1998).

Furthermore, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth Limited (ARACY, 2014) describe parent engagement as being at the centre of a child's learning and development. Throughout a child's life, parent engagement works on a continuum and can change over time. However, the shared responsibility remains the same (ARACY, 2014). Families feel engaged by advocating for their children and supporting their learning (ARACY, 2014). Schools must implement an ongoing process to build networks that enable children to thrive (ARACY, 2014). Positive and impactful parent engagement is underpinned by developing children's social and emotional skills, engaging with the family's background and situation and building up parents' curriculum knowledge (ARACY, 2014). The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth Limited ARACY (2014) concludes that intentional and systemic partnerships with families and parents, built on students' strengths, enable parents to feel empowered and confident to help their children learn anytime, anywhere.

In summary, Parent Engagement is a powerful resource that clearly and positively influences a child's development. By implementing Parent Engagement, schools set up children for success. Partnerships with families are integral to the success of all learners and are ultimately a vital component within a school community and culture.

**Methodology**

To begin the research, I first developed my research question and outlined some areas of interest I wanted to know more about. As a primary school educator, I am always interested in equipping myself with new skills. In particular, I have always been interested in parent partnerships. I often wonder how school communities enable strong and consistent parent engagement. This led me to develop my research question: ***What are the key strategies that underpin Effective Parent Engagement in primary school?***

I began to think about how I would answer my research question. Firstly, I determined my worldview. My worldview is based on being a Social Constructivist. A Social Constructivist worldview represents the social interactions and context in which they occur, therefore developing a shared understanding (Punch, 2014). Social Constructivists seek to make meaning from individuals' experiences and social lives by looking through multiple lenses (Cohen et al., 2017). Linking to my research question, I will explore Effective Strategies for Parent Engagement. My worldview as a Social Constructivist presents the opportunity to reflect and make meaning from multiple points of view and experience (Cohen et al., 2017). I will explore Effective Strategies that underpin Parent Engagement and make meaning from these different perspectives (Cohen et al., 2017).

Diving deeper into this, I determined I would use a subjectivist approach to Epistemology, which enables people to think about how we can know something (Cohen et al., 2017). This goes hand in hand with using Qualitative data, which Cohen et al. (2017) describe as non-numeric information that captures phenomena' qualities, characteristics, and meanings. Using these approaches and Qualitative data, I can examine the relationships between the different elements that emerge (Cohen et al., 2017). Behaviour and data are socially constructed based on contexts (Cohen et al., 2017). Reflecting and examining the Qualitative data holistically provides explicit reasons and evidence to determine how situations affect behaviour and perspectives (Cohen et al., 2017). Using this approach and data will enable me to draw conclusions from various contexts and determine what the evidence is trying to say. Through the use of qualitative data, I aim to weave together different insights into a richer body of evidence (Punch, 2014). This allows the development of a conceptual synthesis for interpretation (Punch, 2014).

To conduct my research and answer my research question, I determined I would use a Systematic Literature review. A Systematic Literature Review is a form of research that synthesises, appraises and describes a range of available research literature to communicate findings to various audiences (Punch 2014). This method answers specific questions using rigorous and explicit methods to communicate findings (Punch 2014). A Systematic Literature Review helps determine different viewpoints that are specific and appropriate to the research question. The choice of the Systematic Literature Review relies heavily on the worldview of Social Constructivism, which looks at the social interactions and behaviours that occur within a context (Punch 2014). The research question encapsulates the idea of social constructivism through its dependency and need to observe social contexts and interactions (Punch, 2018). Through the Systematic Literature Review, multiple themes and trends can develop through the carefully and strategically picked literature by formalised tools (Punch, 2018).

When conducting the Systematic Literature Review, a well-constructed search began. Two different databases were accessed to determine the 15 articles that would be used. Beginning with the PROQUEST database, I used the research question in the search bar ‘***key strategies that underpin Effective Parent Engagement in primary school.’*** 1109 results were initially found. I used filters, including date range within ten years (2014-2024), English language, peer-reviewed scholarly articles, and full text available to decrease the literature produced. This limited the search to 568 results. I began to scale the results using various inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria I next selected were that the text type was a scholarly article and the location was Australia. I excluded texts that were reports, reviews and case studies. This enabled my search to span down to 33 results. Broadening my search further, I used another database EBSCOhost. Using the same filters, inclusion and exclusion data used in the previous database, I was initially provided with 1016 results. In this database, I used keywords such as ‘Student Achievement, School Climate, Effective Parent Engagement, Primary school’ and achieved 36 results. Exporting these results into an Excel spreadsheet, I used further inclusion data in my search. Looking at the title of the articles and the abstract, I determined the parameters of Original Research, Primary School Setting, Australian School and the subject of Parent Engagement. From implementing the criteria, 15 articles were eligible for the commencement of the Systematic Literature Review (see Appendix A). Few articles had to be broadened beyond an Australian School setting.

The next phase of the Systematic Literature Review involved conducting a Thematic Analysis of the data. Thematic Analysis involves identifying themes that emerge from reading and interpreting texts (Walter, 2013). Through Thematic Analysis, inductive coding can be used to mark data segments and organise the material to identify themes and similarities (Walter, 2013). I used Inductive Coding to determine the themes that emerged while reading the texts. This allowed me to read the texts without any preconceived thoughts, opinions or biases towards the results. While reading the 15 determined articles, I used colour coding and descriptive words to code the emerging themes. This involved drawing conclusions from the literature by connecting themes together and recognising the key relationships between these themes. Seven themes were identified: Family Context and Culture, School Climate, Professional Development, Communication, Parent Support Programs, Student Outcomes and Other. The ‘other’ category was used for data that I knew could be relevant and could be used to fall back on if needed (Walter, 2013). The Inductive Coding process organised and grouped the evidence and data in an easy-to-read format (See Appendix B).

In conjunction with this process, Bronfenbrenner will anchor the study to express and understand how a child’s context involves multiple layers and systems that play a big part in the overall wellbeing and learning outcomes (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model emphasises the organisation of assets in social ecology (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's model uses systems to understand how they can integrate and work together to holistically support the child (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Bronfenbrenner’s model consists of five systems directly affecting the child, including learning. The first system is the Microsystem, which involves a child's direct experiences within the home or school (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). The next is the Mesosystem, the links between the Microsystem, such as teacher-parent partnerships (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). There is also the Exosystem, an external system; the Macrosystem, such as the government and overarching, is the Chronosystem, which changes over time (Christenson & Reschly, 2010).

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model showcases the student as an open system (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). This system influences context and operates to support the child over time (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Within the systems is an opportunity for systems to cross over and work together (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). This crossover creates a new system that works to contribute and interact to improve student development (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). School and parent partnerships can be seen as a new system that supports the child and their overall development (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Over time, the systems can change to adapt and suit the child (Christenson & Reschly, 2010).

The child's learning and development are heavily influenced by their context, experiences, and interactions between the overlapping systems (Smith et al., 2019). Interactions across the systems are significant (Smith et al., 2019). The interactions between the school and home environment through communication and experiences enable attitudes and opportunities to support student learning (Smith et al., 2019). The Mesosystem enables teachers and parents to jointly support students' wellbeing and learning outcomes and bridge interactions between the school and home environment (Smith et al., 2019).

Linking back to the research question: ***What are the key strategies that underpin Effective Parent Engagement in primary school?*** The Bronfenbrenner Ecological Model supports the influence of Parent Engagement on a child's overall development. Bronfenbrenner expresses the need for the Mesosystem to develop a system between parents and teachers that helps children succeed (Smith et al., 2019). The importance of using the Bronfenbrenner Ecological theory in my research grounds the topic of Parent Engagement and its significance in a child's life. These partnerships have a significant role to play, and by using the model to anchor my research, I can reflect on and cross collaboration and the key strategies that underpin Parent Engagement.

**Findings**

The purpose of my study was to answer the following research question: ***What are the key strategies that underpin Effective Parent Engagement in primary school?*** When conducting the Systematic Literature Review, initial literature results presented over 1000 eligible articles. The articles were screened for eligibility using the inclusion criteria discussed in the Methodology section. Finally, 15 articles were considered for inclusion. Appendix A presents the general information about each study. Using inductive coding, I compared the studies to find emerging themes. Appendix B summarises the main characteristics and findings from each study. The main themes were Communication, Family Context, and Culture and School Climate, which are located in the table presented below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Theme | Sub-themes | Article |
| Communication | * Trust * Listening * Decision Making * Shared Vision * Advice * Resources * Consistency | Aldridge & McChesney (2020)  Askell-Williams, H. (2015)  Barratt-Pugh et al. (2021)  Finn (2019)  Fischer et al. (2017)  Gavidia-Payne et al. (2014)  Hall & Wurf (2018)  Mann & Gilmore (2021)  Sisson et al. (2021) |
| Family Context and Culture | * Family Structures * Inclusion * Diversity * Embedding Knowledge and Practices | Aldridge & McChesney (2020)  Askell-Williams, H. (2015)  Barr & Saltmarsh (2014)  Barratt-Pugh et al. (2021)  Bubić (2020)  Finn (2019)  Fischer et al. (2017)  Gavidia-Payne et al. (2014)  Saltmarsh et al. (2019)  Saltmarsh et al. (2021) |
| School Climate | * Partnerships * Welcoming Context * Pedagogical Roles | Aldridge & McChesney (2020)  Askell-Williams, H. (2015)  Barr & Saltmarsh (2014)  Finn (2019)  Saltmarsh et al. (2014)  Schueler et al. (2017)  Sisson et al. (2021) |

**Theme 1- Communication**

Communication was a big contender, emerging from nine out of the fifteen proposed papers. Mann and Gilmour (2021) state that communication is a significant element of a shared partnership between schools and families and is everyone's responsibility. Communication between the home and school environment is vital for developing student outcomes (Aldridge & McChesney, 2020). Finn (2018) states that teachers and parents have much to gain when they cooperate. When parents and teachers create partnerships, students can benefit in several ways (Finn, 2018). Barratt-Pugh et al. (2021) suggest that trust and openness should be the key to developing these partnerships. Partnerships require time and effort, and teachers and schools should authentically create opportunities for them to grow (Mann & Gilmour, 2021; Scission et al., 2021). Partnerships should allow parents to feel listened to and enable the space for involvement in decision-making processes (Mann & Gilmour, 2021; Aldridge & McChesney, 2020).

Communication with parents and families develops trust and openness, increasing parent capacity (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2021). Effective and transparent communication practices can build parents' confidence (Fischer et al., 2017). Providing families with explicit reasons and specific opportunities to be involved with their child's learning enables parents to be part of the educative process (Fischer et al., 2017; Askell-Williams, 2015). Enabling parents to be involved supports a change in interactions, allowing a shift in power and a more free-flowing human interaction that puts the child's best interests at the forefront (Scission et al., 2021).

Communication is a vital element when creating partnerships with families. Communication should be about working together as a team with parents and being open to different perspectives (Mann & Gilmour, 2021). Parents and families need to be contacted about all areas of their child's learning, not just the negatives (Mann & Gilmour, 2021). Successful communication practices use various platforms and information-sharing methods (Fischer et al., 2017). There is a need for communication to be presented to parents in forms that are beyond school newsletters, meetings, and take-home homework (Askell-Williams, 2015). Mandated forms of communication can hinder how some teachers develop partnerships with families (Scission et al., 2021). By implementing new communication modes and enabling collaborative documentation, parents and families become contributors instead of just receivers (Scission et al., 2021).

The school can work productively with parents and continue to encourage parent engagement frequently and consistently (Askell-Williams, 2015; Gavidia-Payne et al. (2014). Schools need to shift to partnering with parents in pedagogical ways that enable the bridge between the school and home environment (Finn, 2018). Hall and Wurf (2018) recommend that schools optimise communication with families by implementing school events and activities in which all families can participate. Schools must encourage partnerships to promote student achievement (Hall & Wurf, 2018).

**Theme 2: Family Context and Culture**

Family Contexts and Culture was another theme from ten of the fifteen papers. Family Contexts and Culture are important when promoting parent engagement in schools. Understanding Family Contexts and Cultures enables a positive environment where families feel respected, equal and included (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2021). Schools must consider a child's family structure, context and culture to affirm diversity and develop authentic relationships with families (Aldridge & McChesney, 2020). Assumptions about family structures and context can create barriers to schools, and teachers who take the time to understand their families promote sensitivity, safety and support (Sisson et al., 2021).

Schools have the opportunity to develop partnerships with families and make connections between the home and school environment (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2021). Schools and teachers must provide families with genuine opportunities that align with cultural characteristics (Fischer et al., 2017). For families to feel safe and included within the school environment, schools and teachers must familiarise themselves with cultural differences and beliefs (Fischer et al., 2017). Barratt-Pugh et al. (2021) recommend that schools embed cultural pedagogical practices to acknowledge diversity. Schools must incorporate cultural and linguistic diversity and knowledge to deepen partnerships with families and parents and create a culturally relevant context (Finn, 2019). Teachers and parents can work together to construct a new learning context for the parents and the students (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2021; Finn, 2019). Where possible, these environments must include multiple languages and culturally relevant resources (Fischer et al., 2017). Schools can continue to develop these partnerships by celebrating traditional celebrations and activities to make families feel more connected to the wider community (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2021). Marginalised and vulnerable families need to feel supported by the school and appraised for their significance in a child's development (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014).

Schools can further include a range of different family contexts and cultures by understanding and working with families to determine how to best support them and their children (Saltmarsh et al., 2021). The more supported families and parents feel, the more likely they are to engage within the school community and their children's learning (Saltmarsh et al., 2021; Saltmarsh et al., 2019). Communication policies and practices must also account for the diversity of family structures, contexts, and cultures (Saltmarsh et al., 2021).

Another area of inclusion when understanding family contexts is also understanding parents' learning contexts and backgrounds. Bubić (2020) explored how parents view their ability to influence their child's achievement and outcomes. Bubić (2020) concludes that parents' beliefs and behaviours can positively or negatively affect a child's emotions about school. Students' parents viewed as involved and caring are more likely to value academic achievement (Bubić, 2020). Similarly, Askell-Williams (2015) believes parents' perceptions of school influence their child's attitude towards school. Teachers have the ownership of connecting with these parents in different ways to enable them to feel confident in their parenting and how they can help their children grow (Askell-Williams, H., 2015). Gavidia-Payne et al. (2014) reflect and challenge schools to look beyond stereotypes of different family contexts and cultures and provide parents with opportunities to engage with their children at school. Gavidia-Payne et al. (2014) found that children whose parents were more engaged within the school environment enabled their child to experience higher levels of positive self-concept and quality relationships.

**Theme 3: School Climate**

School Climate is presented in seven of the papers. School Climate plays an important role in the development of parent-teacher relationships. School vision and culture are communicated from the top (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) found that parents acquire an understanding of parent engagement based on the principals' attitudes. Principals' attitudes significantly determine how parents feel about connecting with the school community and if they feel included or intimidated (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). Schools need to promote a climate that creates educational and learning communities based on listening to what the families want and need and enabling families to have a shared responsibility (Sisson et al., 2021; Aldridge & McChesney, 2020). Principals help shape the school, and the relationships teachers form within the school community (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014).

Schools must prioritise school climates to understand how parents contribute to their children's learning and how school and home pedagogies can mingle and coexist (Finn, 2019). There needs to be an agency to take action on the possibility of parents participating in learning (Finn, 2019). Parent Engagement should not be left to the last minute or be considered as an ‘add-on’ (Saltmarsh et al., 2014). Parents need to feel understood and understand that their partnerships are essential for student achievement (Saltmarsh et al., 2014).

Schools' ability to promote parent engagement is essential in ensuring parents feel like trusted and valued contributors to their child's learning and development (Sisson et al., 2021). Askell-Williams (2015) discusses how parents' perceptions of their schooling experiences may make them less likely to involve themselves in school activities. Schools need to use engagement and barrier tools to determine and identify groups of parents and essentially learn how to include them in all aspects of school (Schueler et al., 2017). In doing so, schools must understand the obstacles and barriers to parent engagement and ultimately target and tailor it to families' needs (Schueler et al., 2017). School engagement can be repetitive and follow the same pattern irrespective of needs (Schueler et al., 2017). Schools must develop a climate that accepts all families but is flexible enough to ensure optimal engagement (Schueler et al., 2017). As a child's schooling goes on, Parent Engagement decreases. Schools must advocate for continued and consistent engagement from parents and families and equip teachers with the skills to do so (Schueler et al., 2017). School Climate needs to be co-designed alongside parents and be based on a strengths approach that fosters and caters for all diversities (Aldridge & McChesney, 2020).

**Discussion**

The findings demonstrate three main themes that can be determined as the three main strategies that underpin Effective Parent Engagement. Reflecting on the extant literature in the literature review, many connections can be made to implementing Communication, understanding Family Context and Culture, and understanding the importance of a School Climate when developing parent-school partnerships through parent engagement. Schools must have good, clear, respectful and reciprocal communication for the development of impactful partnerships (ARACY, 2014).

Rapp and Duncan (2012) discuss the importance of Communication and how Open Communication is crucial to developing strong relationships. Epstein (2002) reiterates the importance of Communication through a caring environment that enables information sharing and joint decision-making. Ogawa (1998) states that schools should consistently be bridging to families by reaching out and asking for their input. Communication should facilitate the development of an inclusive and equitable environment (Epstein, 2002).

Harris and Goodall (2008) discuss the importance of partnerships being influenced by context and culture. Schools need to adapt and implement different strategies to engage a diverse range of parents and families and understand them in the community (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Teachers and schools must prioritise genuine partnerships with parents (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Similarly, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth Limited (ARACY, 2014) states that schools should empower every family and engage them in decision-making by connecting with them and understanding their context and culture. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) offer a similar opinion: schools and families need to recognise each other as valuable and work together. The agency of parents must be acknowledged and fostered (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). Teachers should apply this knowledge of a family context and culture and represent this in their classrooms (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014).

A School Climate should be caring and welcoming to all families and contexts (Epstein, 2002; Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Principals set up the standard for teachers by creating a respectful environment for all parents (Epstein, 2002; Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Schools should create an encouraging environment that empowers parents to embed learning within the home (Ogawa, 1998). Goodall and Montgomery (2014) state that the agency of parents should be fostered and acknowledged. Considering parents' ideas, Parent Engagement should move from school-directed to fully engaged (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). Ultimately, schools should have a culture that empowers every family to be involved in all aspects of student learning, such as decision-making (ARACY, 2014).

Linking to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory, creating family-school partnerships supports children’s development and learning (Smith et al., 2019). Through the overlapping spheres and systems, interactions between the school and home environment are integral to developing a new system within the Mesosystem (Smith et al., 2019). Communication effectiveness between the systems is critical when developing these partnerships (Smith et al., 2019). A link between the home and school environment is integral to the interconnectedness that contributes to the success of all children (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Parents are key players in developing and initiating collaborative partnerships (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Families build partnerships based on mutual respect and trust to support a child's learning progress (Christenson & Reschly, 2010).

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory recognises the importance of the intersection between home and school life and how teachers and families can jointly support children's academic and social-emotional learning (Smith et al., 2019). Families have unique proximal experiences that play a part in a child's learning context (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). By working with families, teachers can unpack this knowledge and create connections within a child's Microsystem (Christenson & Reschly, 2010).

The Microsystem can work together to support and encourage learning at home (Smith et al., 2019). Through the connection between these systems, children feel a sense of agency and motivation to feel like they matter (Smith et al., 2019). This sense of community allows families and teachers to shape a child's future (Christenson & Reschly, 2010).

Teachers and schools can implement these insights in their classrooms through the interconnected themes of Communication, Family Context and Culture, School Climate, and Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory.

**Conclusion**

Teachers and parents play a critical role in shaping and setting up their children's lives (Smith et al., 2019). Schools have the power to create a caring environment, have good communication, promote students' academic success and wellbeing and provide the opportunity for parent, family and community engagement (Epstein, 2001). Involving parents in their child's education enables many benefits for both children and parents. These may include: strengthening social-emotional wellbeing, developing positive relationships and networks, building parent knowledge of the curriculum and creating a context and community of support and encouragement (ARACY, 2014). Parent-teacher partnerships strengthen the shared responsibility for a child's development and makes a difference in the success of all children (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

This study aimed to investigate and answer the following research question: ***What are the key strategies that underpin Effective Parent Engagement in primary school?***

Three stand-out themes emerged from the Systematic Literature Review data: Communication, Family Context and Culture and School Climate. These main themes emerged as key strategies and areas in which schools can work to improve Effective Parent Engagement. The significance of these findings is pivotal to schools' implementation of these strategies and their ability to put them at the forefront of their practice. Understanding families and parents' contexts, structures and cultures promotes the development of an authentic relationship based on respect and trust. Clear communication that is provided in different ways and meets the needs of families enables partnerships to have joint responsibility and decision-making. Schools that are welcoming, inclusive, diverse and promote parent engagement enable all community members to feel cared and catered for. The significance of these findings grounds schools and educators to prioritise these strategies to create strong partnerships with parents.

When gathering evidence for this research, several other themes emerged, such as Professional Development and Parent Support Programs. Further research into these areas would allow educators to continue improving their implementation of parent engagement in schools. Continued research in Professional Development for teachers would be a significant area to study. As educators, we need to continue developing our skills. Future research on what Professional Development is needed in regard to parent engagement, would enable educators to feel confident to establish partnerships.

Overall, the findings of this research express the value of parent-teacher partnerships and how critical they are in embedding within a school environment. As an educator, I believe in the importance of constant communication and collaboration with parents to promote the overall development of a child. Using these key strategies and placing them into my practice will promote Effective Parent Engagement.

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**Appendix A- Data Appendix**

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**Appendix B- Inductive Coding**

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|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A damn sight more sensitivity Saltmarsh et al. (2021) | Anecdotes, experience and earning by osmosis Saltmarsh et al. (2019) | Barriers to positive parent-teacher partnerships Mann & Gilmore (2021) | Equipping parents to support their children’s higher education Fischer et al. (2017) | It all comes down to leadership Barr & Saltmash (2014) | Parents and caregivers perceptions Aldridge & McChesney (2021) | Specifying the contributions of parents as pedagogies Finn (2019) | Measuring parent perceptions Schueler et al. (2017) | Preparing for parents Saltmarsh et al. (2015) | Re-imagining family engagement Sisson et al. (2022) | Supporting parents as their child’s first teacher Barratt-pugh (2021) | Strengthening school-family collaborations Hall & Wurf (2018) | Children’s self-concept Gavidia-payne et al. (2014) | The role of parent self-efficacy Bubic et al. (2021) | Parents' perspectives of school mental health promotion Askell-Williams (2016) |
| Family structures | Need for better understandings between cultural beliefs and professional practice | Parents more engaged than teachers | Parental engagement makes a difference to students’ academic achievement | Principals shape relationships in schools | Teacher support | Understanding parent contributions | Families who are more engaged and involved boost their children academically | Pre-service teachers need more professional development | Changing environment and communication | Partnerships are at the heart of success parent programs | Programs that address the needs of the entire family is important for increasing academic outcomes | Parental engagement and student-teacher relationships shape self-concept | Parents view of their ability to influence childrens school achievement | Children with less strong mental health led parents to feel that they are less capable at parenting |
| Understanding how children and their families can be better understood | Need skills for engaging effectively with parents | Negative feelings towards teacher/parent partnerships | Focus on incorporating culture and academic socialisation | Principals attitude toward parents- enables parents to feel entitled or intimidated | Student behaviour | Appreciation of parents contribution pedagogically | Improved home school connections boost children academically | Early childhood pays more attention to preparing teachers relationship building | Creating authentic partnerships with families is a key element in creating educational context | Partnerships increase parents confidence when engaging in their childs learning | Need to maintain strong partnerships with families and communities | Positivie benefits of parents being involved in childrens lives | Parents beliefs of their efficacy influences student outcomes | Less capable parents provide environmental triggers for children’s mental health difficulties |
| Designing school activities to enable family participation | Lacking in knowledge of how to deal with parents | Lack of trust between teachers and parents | Parent engagement programs | Shifting power relationships | Affirming diversity | Need more inclusive schools | How can parent engagement be effective | Parent engagement drops off as children progress through schooling | Education contexts as learning communities | Strong partnerships create context | Use strengths in family partnerships to foster individual student learning, wellbeing and other positive outcomes | Children whose parents are more engaged experienced higher quality student-teacher relationships- meaning positive self-concept | Stronger self-efficacy parents support children more | Parenting capabilities |
| Ensure communication policies and practices take adequate account of diversity of family structures | Need more inclusion of development for new teachers | Parents feel like they are not being listened to | Present information and communication in a variety of ways | Teachers need to be better prepared to work with parents | Welcoming school | Increasing opportunities for shared attention/curriculum/assessment |  | Parent engagement is addressed as feeling like an add on and incidental - ad hoc way | Vision for partnership between teachers and families | Cultural, Linguistic knowledge and practices | Strong partnerships can improve student engagement | Encourage parent involvement | Parents who are more caring and involved promote good work habits in children | Parents self assessed their own capabilities- parents may be less likely to value school initiatives |
| Professional development |  | Teachers need professional development and to be willing to learn from parents | Empower parents to learn how to edcuate | Importance of school culture | Communication | Teachers need suitable training |  | Teachers need more professional development | Contributions from parents as collaborative partners | Parents trust and respect educators | Connect families with services to gain better understanding of their childs potential | Identify and prevent potential demographic and SES barriers |  | Three way relationship between parent involvement, school trauncy and poor mental health |
| Communication |  | Parents as decision makers | Provide explicit and specific opportunities for parents to engage | Vulnerable and marginalised community members | Assessment criteria | Increase proximity of adults having genuine pedagogical roles |  | Parent engagement warrants urgent attention |  | Embedding Inidgenous knowledge into pedagogy | Provide parent support | 32 |  | low-efficacious parents percieve school work unfavourably- less involved |
|  |  | Relationship building |  | Practices that sustain and foster parent engagement | Positioned parents who choose not to engage with the school as a problem |  |  | Parent engagement is essential for student achievement |  | Programs need to target culturally diverse families |  |  |  | Parents perceptions being based on prior experience or lack of involvement |
|  |  |  |  |  | Strengths based approach to receive parent advice |  |  |  |  | Develop authentic and respectful ways of talking with families |  |  |  | There needs to be more involvement of families and teachers in school-based health promotion programs |
|  |  |  |  |  | Influence of school climate |  |  |  |  | Valuing cultural diversity |  |  |  | School-family partnerships are influenced by the way the schools promote partnerships |
|  |  |  |  |  | Importance of communication between school and home |  |  |  |  | Appropriate resources |  |  | 33 | Irrespect for parental needs |
|  |  |  |  |  | Increase parent engagement for Australians and Aboriginal families |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Schools need to be empathetic to the diverse needs and world views of parents |
|  |  |  |  |  | Teacher support |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Encourage engagement and promote mental health |
|  |  |  |  |  | Develop a relationship building process focussed on listening |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Porfessional development |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Providing support to parents to promote menatl health |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Working productively with parents is the key |

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