

Frequently Asked Questions

Parent and Family Engagement



What is parent and family engagement?

The Standard for Australian Boarding Schools and Residences (AS5725:2015) defines parent and family engagement as:

- Partnerships between parents/families and boarding service management and staff that have a positive effect on boarders' academic progress and wellbeing, and;
- Approaches that support parents/families to be involved in their children's learning and boarding experience.

Why is parent and family engagement important?

Parent, family and community engagement is recognised as good practice in boarding. Research shows that when parents engage with their children's learning in positive and appropriate ways, students do better in their academic studies.

It reflects the importance of involving parents in their children's learning to improve the boarding experience. Section 5 in the Australian Standard addresses the minimum requirements for boarding service providers in parent/family and also community engagement.

Effective parent engagement should:

1. Support parent/family engagement in boarder learning.
2. Involve parents and families in policy development and decision-making.
3. Enrich boarding programs and activities.
4. Consider the diverse needs and expectations of parents/families with students who have particular needs.

How can parents and families positively engage in boarder learning and schooling?

Parents and families can positively engage in their children's learning, schooling and boarding by:

- Talking about their hopes for their children's education and planning the future with their children
- Attending school and boarding induction activities
- Having high expectations that their children will succeed in their studies and in boarding
- Talking about the importance and enjoyment of learning
- Encouraging children and praising their efforts to persist and succeed
- Talking about different ways of learning and different strategies to use
- Taking an interest in assignments and homework, and sometimes helping with the content
- Regularly communicating with boarding and school staff
- Taking a positive, "solution finding" approach with boarding/school staff to work through issues and problems that are affecting or involve their children
- Where possible, attending school and boarding activities during the school year
- Understanding that it is still important to support children's learning as they move through secondary school
- Talking with teenagers about social issues, and linking their school work to the wider world
- Where possible, being involved in school and boarding committees and groups
- Participating in surveys and other school/boarding requests for opinion.

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How can boarding and school staff support parents and families to engage and partner in their children's learning and schooling?

Boarding and school staff can support parents and families to engage and partner by:

- Having high expectations of parents/families and students, and regularly communicating these
- Developing their own understanding of effective parent/family engagement and how to create an engagement culture, including through professional development activities
- Putting in place policies and procedures that emphasise proactive, two-way or many-ways communication and information sharing around a wide range of interests and issues
- Supporting parents and families with plain language information about the boarding service
- Providing good information and support to parents/families before, and as, their children transition into and out of boarding
- Frequently reaching out to parents, and especially to those who are "hard to reach" for geographic, work, technology, language and other reasons
- Working hard to build trusting relationships and develop a shared sense of responsibility for children's education
- Supporting parents and families to understand curriculum and assessment
- Deliberately creating partnerships with parents/families to share knowledge, expertise and effort in support of children's learning and wellbeing

- Taking a pro-active and positive "solution finding" approach with parents/families and their children to work through issues and problems
- Regularly asking parents/families for feedback and using this to support students in their learning and living, and to inform boarding/school continuous improvement activities
- Dedicating staff and other resources to engagement activity
- Creating more deliberate and purposeful links between teaching and boarding/residence staff
- Providing opportunities for parents to connect with each other and develop support networks.
- Drawing on community relationships and resources to support individual boarder needs, and enrich the boarding experience.

For more information on parent, family and community engagement and the Remote Indigenous Parents Association, visit the Boarding Australia website

www.boardingaustralia.edu.au